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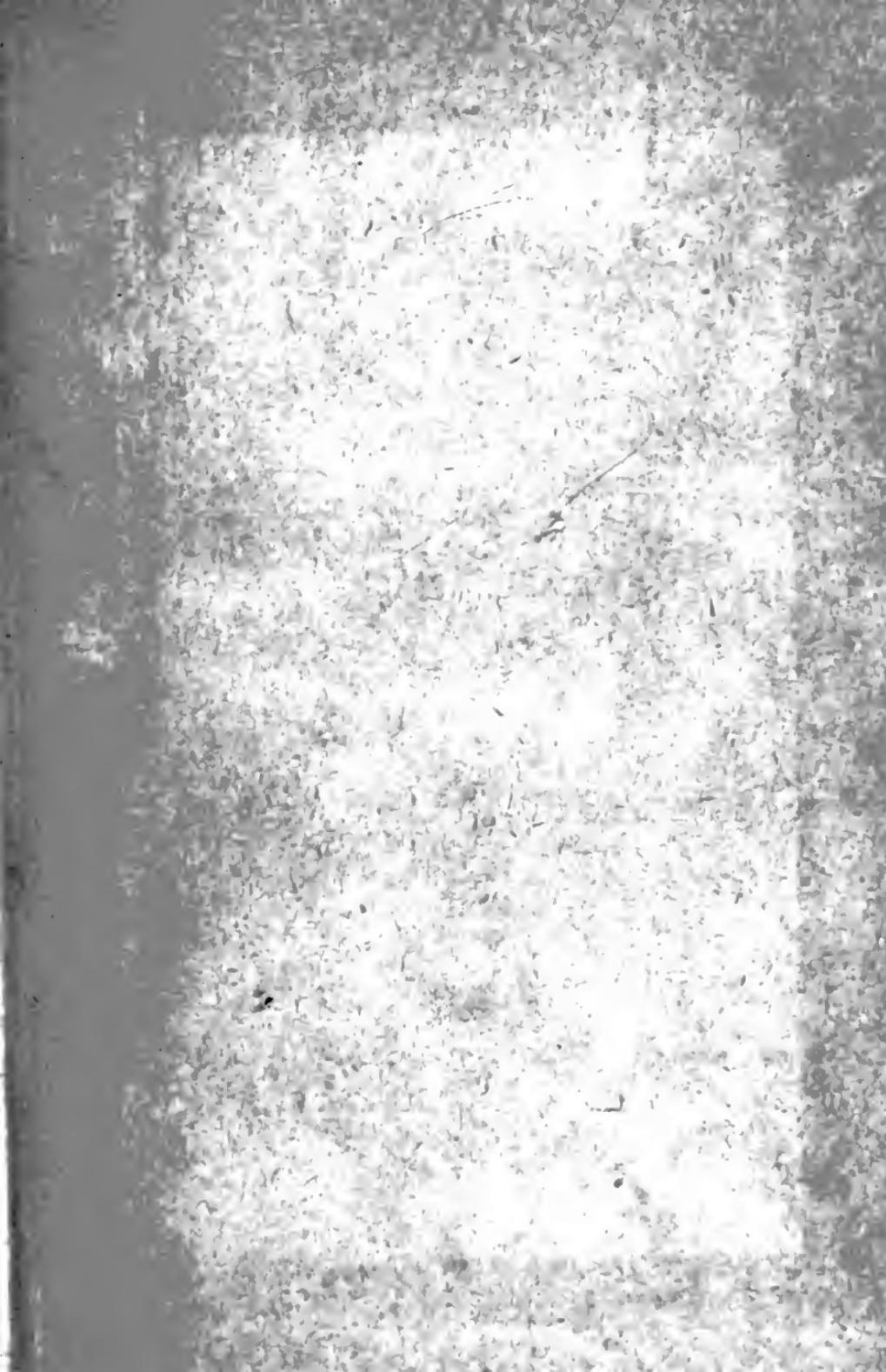
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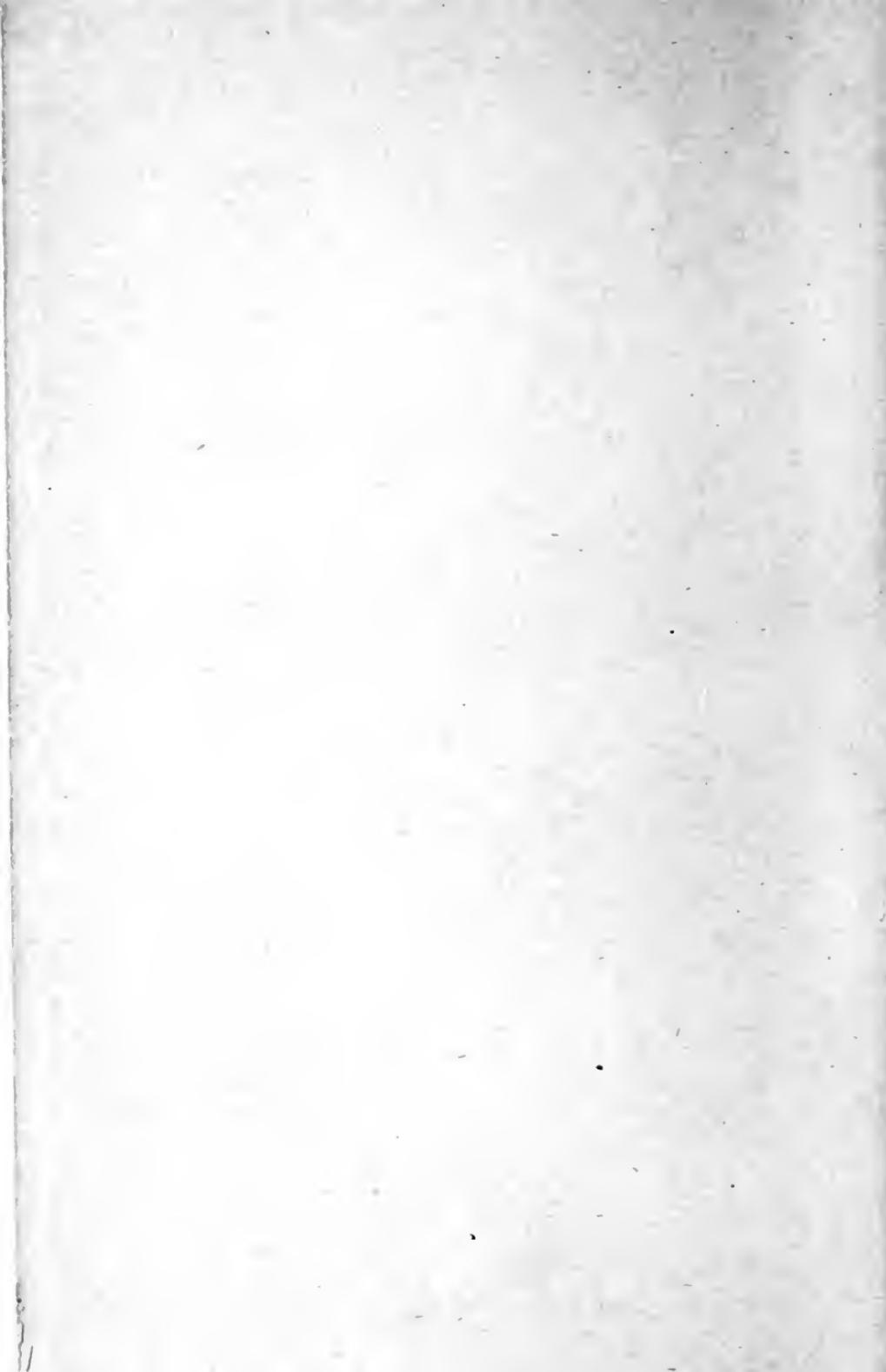




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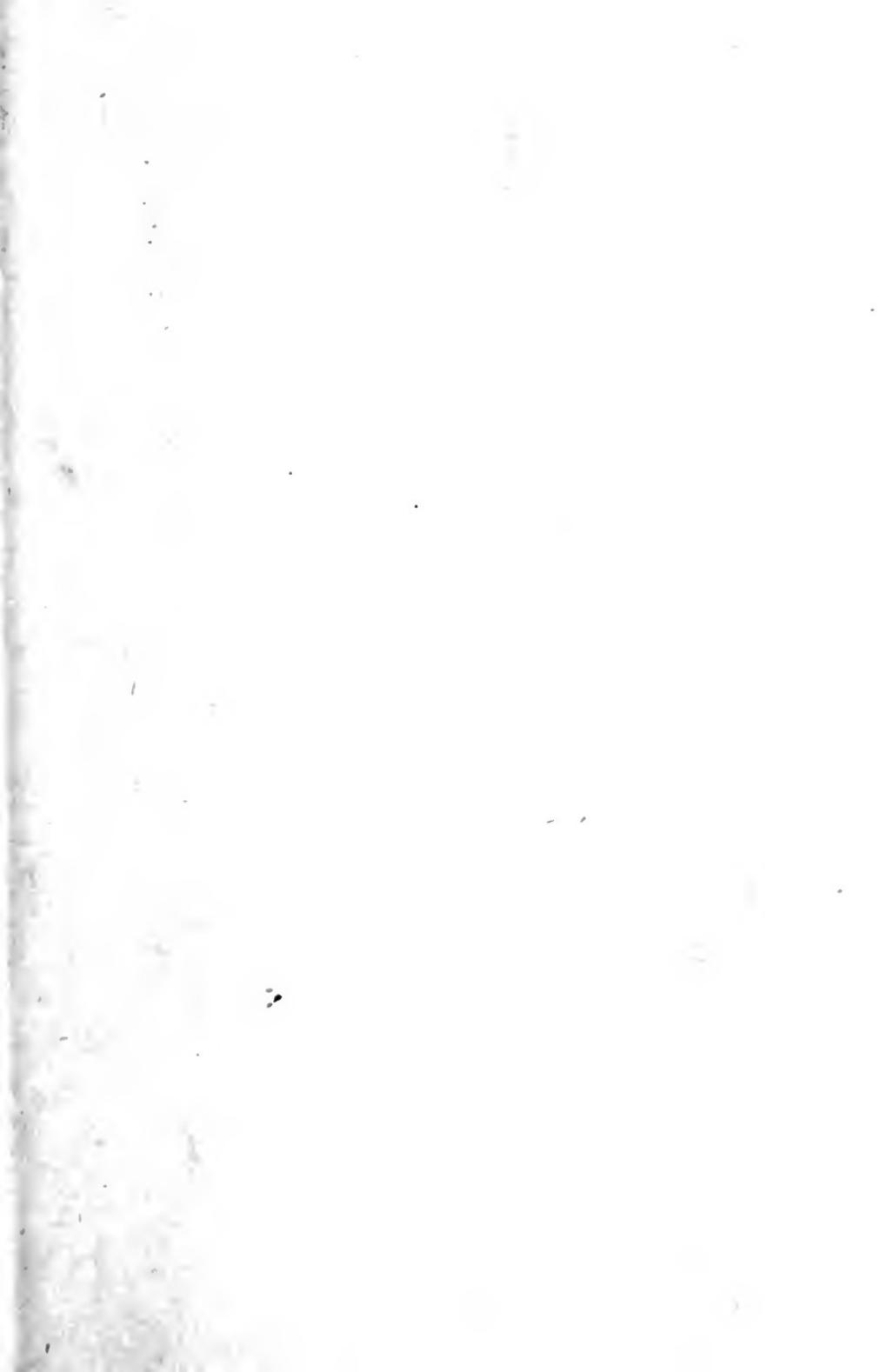
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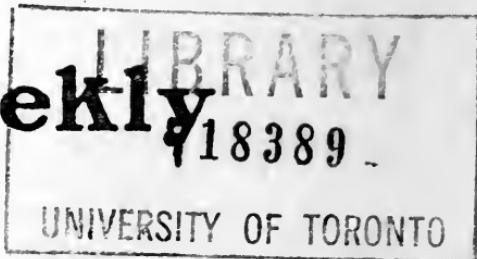


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FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

CHAPTER ONE

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

ON the 17th day of January, in 1863, much happened in the bustling activities of the City of Manchester that was duly chronicled in the pages of its press and its records. But there occurred one event which passed by absolutely unrecorded save in a brief entry at the registry of births. It was the advent of a baby boy to a schoolmaster's home in a side street—known as York Place—that juts out at right angles to Oxford Road. "He is a sturdy, healthy little fellow," wrote the fond father that self-same day to a near relative, "stronger and much more lively than his little sister. He has fine curly hair. I am quite proud of him. May he live to become a great man."

A little more than forty years afterwards, "the sturdy, healthy little fellow" visited his native city in the capacity of a Cabinet Minister, and by the magic skill of his diplomacy saved Manchester from an industrial dispute which threatened to overthrow her commercial prestige and to destroy her markets. A few months later he came again,

FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

in the great rôle of Chancellor of the Exchequer—in the line of succession to Pitt and Peel, Gladstone and Disraeli—as the custodian of the nation's finances. Such is the romance of Mr. Lloyd George's career!

The locality of his birth, however, was the accident of circumstance. Although Mr. Lloyd George has been described as "a Lancashire lad," he is thoroughly and essentially Welsh, as adjudged by all the tests and standards that determine nationality. "I am," he declared on one occasion, "first and last, and above everything, a Welshman." His father was a native of Pembroke-shire, and his ancestors can be traced back for generations. It is a matter of historic fact that a number of Flemish soldiers landed in Pembroke-shire with the Earl of Richmond—afterwards Henry VII. Several of them settled down in the county in possession of estates given them in return for their services.

There is reason to believe that the Georges are originally Flemish, but ethnographic reasons exist for regarding the family as largely, and indeed predominantly, blended with the local Cymric element. His great-grandfather, William George, settled at a farm, Tresinwen, whose acres stretched down to the sea, and include the spot on which the French invaders landed in 1791, when they were scared into flight at the sight of a brave contingent of Welsh women who, adorned with red shawls, appeared in the distance to be a formidable array of soldiers in scarlet tunics.

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

The family were well endowed with this world's goods. They belonged to the yeoman class. They kept both men and maid-servants, while the tenants who lived on the land in small cottages were also employed by them. William George and his wife lived to the respective ages of 80 and 90 years. They were held in repute throughout the district for their wisdom and piety, for their pithy sayings and for their good deeds. They had two sons, and the elder of these—David by name—married the daughter of a well-to-do farmer in South Pembrokeshire. The young couple made their home in a large farm called Trecoed, and situated about four miles from Fishguard. The husband died in the prime of life, leaving behind him a family of four girls and two boys. The mother was noted for her kindness of heart, and for her hospitality. Those were the hard days when barns and homesteads had to serve as sanctuaries of worship for the Welsh peasantry. Mrs. George was a zealous Baptist, and as the result of her zeal and labour the present Baptist Church at Scleddy, near Fishguard, was founded. The entire financial responsibility for the erection of the chapel was undertaken by her.

It is probable that in no county in Britain does the yeoman fill so large and distinctive a place in the rural life as in Pembrokeshire. He is not merely attached to the soil, but he is rooted in it. Trade is not for him. He regards it with a feeling akin to disdain. Even the professions of law and medicine represent for him only a kind of second best. The highest sphere

FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

in his sight is that of the yeoman—the occupier and the tiller of his own soil. The Georges all through their history were of the yeoman class, and attachment to the native soil was thus bred in the bone. But, sooner or later, uniformity must have its break, and so among the Georges, with their successive generations of yeomen attached to the Pembroke soil, there came at length the exception. Trecoed was one of the best farms of its kind in Pembrokeshire, and it afforded a splendid opportunity for the elder son to pursue the calling of his forebears. But the elder son in this instance was not anxious to remain on in the old home. His inherited love of the soil had become absorbed in his greater love for books. His great ambition was to become, not a farmer, but a scholar. He was given a good education and he made such good use of his opportunities, that while yet in his teens he gained the reputation of being "the most learned man" in the district. At the impulse of ambition he left the rural homestead, with its meagre equipment, for London with all its myriad opportunities for self culture. Here he spent some years as a tutor in a private school, devoting his nights to the midnight oil in his eager quest after knowledge. After some years in London, he went to Liverpool to take charge of a school managed by a committee of Unitarians, chief of whom was the distinguished divine, Dr. Henry Martineau.

It is easy to understand how powerfully such contact with one of the greatest intellects of the age must have reacted on the young schoolmaster



MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S FATHER.

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

from Wales. It stimulated his faculties and quickened his development. To the end of his days he was accustomed to say that he owed more to his association with Martineau than to any other influence in his life. After spending eight years in Liverpool, he returned to his native county and opened a grammar school at Haverfordwest.

The motive which prompted his return was in every way a worthy one. He was anxious to have some part in the laudable task of leading the youth of Pembrokeshire along the path that made for higher education. But he was in advance of the times. The popular idea of education was strictly limited to the knowledge of "the three R's." Learning was regarded as the luxury and the pastime of the affluent only. The meagre equipment of the elementary school was deemed quite sufficient for the great bulk of those who have to toil for their daily bread. There was therefore little interest and less support for any pioneer like the young George, who had already proved that he loved books more than bread and regarded knowledge as of more value than wealth.

He remained at Haverfordwest for a period of some four years, at the end of which, after an arduous and heroic struggle, he left to take up the position of headmaster in an elementary school in Pwllheli, in Carnarvonshire. The position of an elementary schoolmaster was not nearly as congenial to a spirit so keen on education as was that of the headmastership of a grammar school. It crabbed his energies and denied him the zest

FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

and the opportunity of leading his pupils along the high paths. Still, the remuneration was certain, and, after his experiences at Haverfordwest, that was a consideration that had to be taken into account. Moreover, the dull routine of his life here became suffused with the golden light of romance, for while at Pwllheli he married a young Welsh lass of the name of Elizabeth Lloyd, who was the daughter of the Rev. David Lloyd, Baptist minister in the neighbouring village of Llanystum-dwy. From Pwllheli the young couple removed to Manchester, where Mr. William George took charge of a large elementary school, and here, on the 17th of January, in 1863, a son was born. To him was given the name of David Lloyd George.

Unfortunately, the father's health, always delicate, broke down as the result of the arduous strain he had undergone in past years. A change of environment became an imperative necessity. There was no course open but to relinquish the scholastic profession, with its long hours in the close and oppressive atmosphere of an ill-ventilated school-house, for the open air and the outdoor life. Just at this time the chance of buying the lease of a small farm near the town of Haverfordwest was offered to him. The lot of the farmer had an attraction for him—son of the soil as he was. It marked the reversion to type. The call of the blood prevailed, as it invariably does. He, therefore, removed, along with his wife and two children, to his native heath. And here, in the seclusion of his little farm, he spent two happy years. Each day's tasks alternated between

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

manual toil and mental study. The student was never lost in the farmer. Books shared with agricultural implements the distinction of being necessary requisites in the equipment of that little farm home.

But its seclusion could not secure immunity from the ills that flesh is heir to.

When their young boy was just a year old, he was laid aside with an attack of croup which proved so severe that his life was despaired of. A messenger was hastily despatched through sleet and snow to the neighbouring town in quest of the doctor. The doctor—a young man fresh from the hospital—hastened back just in time to administer the necessary relief. He devoted himself to the “case” with a skill and an assiduity that left nothing to chance. He had his reward: there came a “turn” for the better, and the life of the young child was saved. The doctor is still living, a venerable figure, hale and hearty, and one of the most devoted and enthusiastic in the legion of Mr. Lloyd George’s political supporters. “I never dreamt”—to quote his words to the present writer—“that in saving the life of that little child as he lay unconscious in the wicker cradle on that farm hearth, that I was saving the life of the national leader of Wales. Little did I think that night, as I drove back, that in years to come I should be going all the way from Pembroke to Cardiff to rally round his standard and to swear fealty to him as my political chief.” But the Angel of Death, baulked in its first attempt to break up that little family circle at Bull Fold,

FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

returned the following year. This time it attacked the head of the home—and, alas, succeeded. Mr. William George was laid aside with pneumonia, and after only a few days' illness passed peacefully away, leaving his widow and two little mites unprovided for. The burden of keeping the home together was made still heavier by reason of the fact that shortly after his death a posthumous son was born.

But there is a Divine guardianship which always tempers the east wind for the shorn lamb. So it proved in the experience of the sorrowing widow and her fatherless children. Away in the old home, in her native village of Llanystumdwy, Mrs. George had a bachelor brother. On hearing of his sister's bereavement, Mr. Richard Lloyd set out on the long and tedious journey from Carnarvonshire to Pembrokeshire, to give succour and comfort to his widowed sister and unprotected family. The little farm had to be given up, for all the tender hopes which had been woven on its hearthstone had become ruthlessly shattered. Mr. Richard Lloyd arranged for the sale of the furniture and effects, and one of Mr. Lloyd George's earliest memories—indelibly stamped by the rude force of the bitter circumstances—is this scene of the selling up of his first home. At the time he was a little over two years old, but he vividly remembers how he and his little sister, awed and saddened at the sight of a crowd of people bidding for the various articles that had made up the little home, stuck pebbles under the gate in the hope of preventing the



LLOYD GEORGE
AT THE AGE
OF 2½ YEARS



PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

purchasers from carrying the furniture away. Truly a pathetic scene! the memory of which moistened Mr. Lloyd George's eye when in late years he recalled the incident.

Mr. Richard Lloyd brought back with him to the old home, at Llanystumdwy, the fatherless children, henceforth to be the first charge on his care—the sacred burden of his life.

Llanystumdwy is a picturesque little village on the banks of the River Dwyfawr, and is about two miles from Criccieth, an embryonic watering place on the Carnarvon coast. It is situated in an amphitheatre of sharply outlined mountains with their sheer precipices and rugged ranges, while in the distance is the murmur of the great Atlantic, with its restless seas ever breaking in impotent fury against the immemorial bulwarks of rock, and sand, and shingle. The summits of the encircling chain of mountains are for the greater part of the winter covered with snow, the highest and most magnificent being that known in the English tongue as Snowdon. But the Welsh appellation from time immemorial is Eryri, or Creigiau Eryri. Eryr is the Welsh word for eagle, the plural form being Eryri, so that a literal translation of Creigiau Eryri would be "the Crags of the Eagles," based, possibly, on the old tradition that eagles have bred in the lofty clefts of these mountains. The name may also be due to the fact that the representation of the eagle, which was the symbol among the old Cymry for warlike courage, was intended to symbolise the existence of the hard granite which lies embedded in these

FROM VILLAGE GREEN TO DOWNING STREET

mountains. It is an interesting fact that Llewarch Brydydd y Moch, who was Bard to Prince Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, in A.D. 1200, declared : " Druids have foretold that great heroes shall arise from the race of the Eagles of Eryri." That ancient prophecy has been literally fulfilled as the history of modern Wales amply attests.

The district around the little village of Llanystumdwy is saturated with historic memories, and is eloquent with the story of Welsh history. The twin mountains Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Llewelyn—rearing their venerable heads in the distance—are a constant memorial of the two brothers—David and Llewelyn—who perished in Wales' final struggle for independence, while the magnificent castles that form a ring of sentinels around Snowdonia—dismantled badges of the conquest as they now are—contribute in their very decay and ruins to the adornment of one of the most picturesque parts of the Principality.

It was into such a district, consecrated by historic memories, that Mr. Lloyd George was brought when the home in Pembrokeshire was broken up, and amid the silence of the mountains that tower so majestically over the village he first learnt to brood over the greatness and destiny of Wales. Surrounded though the little homestead was by Nature's glories, its hearth, however, was darkened with the shadows of domestic anxiety. " My mother"—to quote Mr. Lloyd George's words—" had to make a hard struggle to bring up her children. But she never complained and never

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spoke of her struggles. It was not until long after that we were able to appreciate how fine had been her spirit in the hard task of bringing up her fatherless children. Our bread was home-made. We scarcely ever ate fresh meat, and I remember that our greatest luxury was half an egg for each child on Sunday mornings."

Mr. Lloyd George has more than once described himself as "a village lad," and the description is strictly accurate. He lived the ordinary life of a cottager's boy, speaking the pure idiomatic language of the Welsh peasantry, and spending his leisure in the woods and on the hills. The rendezvous of the village was really the stone bridge that spans the little river Dwyfawr as it leisurely wends its way to the sea. Here on the parapets of the bridge the boys were accustomed to sit and while away their leisure in chat and play. The more ambitious among them carved out their names in the stone-work, and in one of the ledges there is still to be seen a memorial of those times in the initials D.L.G., cut deeply into the stone.

"The land all around the village," Mr. Lloyd George has been heard to say, "was strictly preserved, but that did not prevent us youngsters from having our full share of Nature's bounties in the form of apples and nuts. Whenever we were on one of these marauding expeditions, we used to have some of our companions keep watch lest we should be caught by the keepers. Our deep dread of the keeper was not without cause. A boy who had killed a hare had to be

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sent away by his widowed mother from the farm she occupied : failing that, she was told that she would be turned out of her home." Even such a regime of terror did not, however, avail to deter him from being always ready to organise " marauding expeditions." He was ever " marauding " in search of rabbits, and it appears that his constant companion was a dog called " Whig." In those days the villagers saw nothing incongruous in the association of Lloyd George and " Whig," but who can conceive of any " Whig " being able to keep step with him now? " Whig " was succeeded by a dog which was brought home by a sailor from Hamburg, and was known as " Bismarck." The memory of Mr. Lloyd George's devotion to the animal is still one of the traditions of the village. They were inseparable, and young Lloyd George was always expatiating to his companions on the wonderful prowess and sagacity of his favourite. May one not find in that fondness for " Bismarck " the germ of that attachment for things German which found such full and eloquent expression in his recent tour through Germany?

Mr. Lloyd George has other memories that perpetuate the daring exploits of his boyhood. On one occasion he nearly lost the fingers of his right hand through the playful action of one of his companions in suddenly giving a " turn " to the winch in which they lay. The hand still bears the trace. On another occasion, while at play, one of his companions drove a pitch-fork right under his eye, and it was a miracle that he was not deprived



MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S MOTHER.



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of the use of the eye. The scar is still to be seen there—a lasting memorial of his providential deliverance. Some time after this he led a party of boys into a house that was in course of construction, and, feigning an attack upon the enemy's citadel, he took hold of the lintel. Down came the bricks, and he was buried under the débris. The villagers rushed to the scene in consternation and panic, fearing the worst, but, to their amazement as much as to their joy, the daring lad emerged unhurt.

These and other incidents are still green in the memory of the villagers, and they delight in recalling them with dramatic force and quickened interest. "You see," said the village tailor to the writer, "Lloyd George is one of us. I made his first coat for him, and I remember remarking to him at the time, 'There, now, I have made a man of you.' But I confess"—this in a tone suffused with self-reproach—"I had then no idea that I was helping to make so great a man."

At the further end of the village—on the banks of the river—stands the National School, then, as now, the only school in the place. The schoolmaster at that time was a man of quiet demeanour who performed the hum-drum duties of his monotonous lot with absolute conscientiousness. He was quite untouched with the gift of Celtic imaginativeness, but some of his old pupils declare that on one occasion he told them the story of the German schoolmaster who was accustomed to doff his hat to his scholars on the ground that there

might be among them some great man of the future. "So it proved," he proceeded to say, "for among those lads was no other than the great Martin Luther; and who knows what latent possibilities are lurking in some of you; who can tell but that one of you may some day become the Prime Minister?"

It may be that the utterance was just one of those pedagogic platitudes which schoolmasters fall back upon in the monotony of their tasks, but when one remembers that among those lads was the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, the utterance sounds prophetic, and irresistibly recalls Shemstone's lines:—

" Yet nursed with skill—what dazzling fruits
appear;
E'en now sagacious foresight points to show
· · · · · *A Chancellor in embryo.*"

Although an overwhelming majority of the 150 pupils attending the school were the children of Nonconformist parents, the managers never lost sight of the fact that it was primarily a church school, founded for the exposition of the creed and teaching of the Anglican Church. Twice every year the children were marched to the Parish Church to recite the Creed and to be examined in the Catechism. On the eve of one of these gatherings, when the children were all aglow with excitement in anticipation of the procession of the morrow, young Lloyd George overheard his uncle, the most uncompromising of Dissenters, vehemently declaim against

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this practice of marching Nonconformist children to the Parish Church.

The fiery protest of his uncle fell on the lad's impetuous nature like a spark of gunpowder. All that night he lay awake, planning how best to avert the lurking perils which he had heard his uncle so graphically portray. He was up early the next morning with a definite plan of campaign. Gathering his school companions together he repeated to them the words he had heard fall from his uncle's lips, and with that dramatic touch, which must even then have marked out the embryonic orator, he awed them with a deep sense of fear, the direct result of which was made painfully evident when an hour later, assembled in the Parish Church, they were requested by the Vicar to repeat the Creed. To the undisguised astonishment of the auditors, among whom were members of county families in the immediate vicinity, not a syllable came in response. The headmaster was appealed to. In his wonted note of authority he peremptorily repeated the request, in full confidence of being instantly obeyed. But the silence remained absolutely unbroken. Remonstrance followed remonstrance, and threat upon threat, but all to no purpose. The whole class continued obdurate in its muteness. At last, after a most painful interval, the intense agony of which was only too visible in the poor schoolmaster's face, Mr. Lloyd George's younger brother, at the impulse of a feeling of pity, suddenly blurted out : "I believe," and the rest of the class immediately chimed in.

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But though the young revolter on that occasion lost his retinue, and was punished by being deprived of the good conduct prize which he had already earned, he nevertheless triumphed, for never again were the children marched to the church to repeat the Creed.

But this was by no means the only instance of the crusade against Anglicanism which the youthful Dissenter was bent upon making. On another of these official occasions, when the children were to be marched to the parish church, young Lloyd George, on his way to school, espied a companion faultlessly attired in his Sunday suit. The well groomed appearance of the lad—the well-brushed hair radiant with an extra touch of oil, and the loud creak of his Sunday boots—all told a tale which young Lloyd George instantly understood. The lad was to be confirmed that morning. To the young revolter it seemed nothing short of a great disaster that even one lamb should thus be lured out of the Non-conformist fold. To him it seemed as though there was no price too big to pay in order to rob mother church of her capture. His line of action was decided upon in a trice. He persuaded his companion to join him in playing truant, expatiating on the glories of the woods and the certainty of sport. His companion, notwithstanding the Sunday garb, instantly succumbed to the siren voice of the tempter, and both vicar and schoolmaster looked in vain that day for their new adherent.

Mr. Lloyd George had never played truant before. He had been taught by his uncle that truancy

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was an offence that demanded severe punishment. Still, he had no qualms of conscience,—no foreboding sense of fear. When he reached home at mid-day, he made a clean breast to his uncle, declaring in triumphant tones that he had thought it worth while to play truant in order to snatch from the church its newly made proselyte. The stern face of the sturdy old Nonconformist immediately relaxed into the happiest of smiles. He recognised the motive of the deed, and instead of punishment, young Lloyd George received a pat and a “well done, my boy,” which invested him with all the glory of a veritable hero. The Sunday-attired lad is now a district councillor and a deacon in a little Methodist chapel in the heart of Carnarvonshire. If it had not been for Mr. Lloyd George, he would in all probability have been a churchwarden, if not, indeed, a rector in some rural parish in the Principality. These incidents, trivial in themselves, are full of significance when looked back upon from the vantage-ground of subsequent years. They mark the first flittings of that eager and combative spirit which has made Mr. Lloyd George the most formidable antagonist of the Anglican Church in the grim struggle over the schools.

CHAPTER TWO

FORCES AND FACTORS

To unveil the source of the early influences that moulded Mr. Lloyd George's character at its most impressionable period and gave his career that quickening impulse to reach out to so lofty a summit in the national life of his country, one must needs know his uncle, Mr. Richard Lloyd. His strong face, firm lips, and quiet demeanour proclaim his order. He hails from that old Puritanic stock out of which Cromwell framed his Ironsides and the *Mayflower* its Pilgrim Fathers: that spiritual ancestry, austere and inviolable, which has found in religion its source of solace and of inspiration.

Mr. Richard Lloyd belongs to the strictest and most uncompromising sect in Nonconformity, that known as Campbellite Baptists. They have no recognised or paid minister. Their pastors or leaders follow the Apostolic mode of combining the labour of preaching the Gospel with that of a handicraft upon which they are solely dependent for their livelihood. As far back as the year 1799, the Baptist denomination in Wales was rent with a division. The famous divine, Christmas Evans, led the great majority who stood by the existing order of things. The minority, who were in favour of the tenets advocated by the Campbellite Baptists, whose home and centre were in Scotland, were led by a versatile Welshman known as Jones of Ramoth. The sphere of his influence was the



Photo by Richard Lloyd George.

MR. WILLIAM GEORGE
(BROTHER).

MR. LLOYD GEORGE. MR. J. HUGH EDWARDS.
MR. RICHARD LLOYD
(UNCLE).



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district where the north-western portion of Merionethshire and the south-eastern part of Carnarvonshire touch each other. Here he wielded an influence and an authority that remained absolutely unshaken under the force of the mighty eloquence of Christmas Evans.

More than a century has since passed by and much water has flowed under the bridge at Llanystumdwy, but the little Baptist church there knows no change in its attitude to the general body of the Baptist denomination. It maintains its aloofness and its rigid independence, its strict fellowship, its weekly breaking of bread and its unpaid ministry. It has been splendidly served by a succession of able and devoted men. For long years its ministrations were conducted by David Lloyd—Mr. Lloyd George's grandfather on the maternal side, after whom he has been named. David Lloyd was succeeded by Richard Lloyd, and he has ministered for more than fifty years, Sunday after Sunday, with the exception of one solitary break due to illness, without receiving the slightest remuneration for his services. This is he who so nobly undertook the care and the training of young Mr. Lloyd George when left a fatherless child. Adjoining the cottage where the family lived was the little shop where Mr. Richard Lloyd carried on his business as a shoemaker. This workshop was the hub of the village—the senate where “village statesmen talked with looks profound.” It was the battle-ground where all the eager disputation of the various sects and factions were waged over religious creeds.

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Any casual visitor to a Welsh village, as has been truly observed, can hardly linger on the bridge or spend half an hour in the village post-office without seeing that the practice and the discussion of religion is the one great interest of its life. This was pre-eminently so in the village of Llanystumdwy, and the all-commanding topic found its pivot in that little workshop where Richard Lloyd sat at his bench with all the gravity of a judge. Every Monday the deacons and elders of the various Bethels in the surrounding district congregated there. Sunday's sermons were reviewed and eagerly discussed, and not infrequently were there hot conflicts fought over some knotty theological point or some philosophic utterance of the Sabbath day. But the Welsh are as eager politicians as they are theologians. There is embedded in them that Cromwellian instinct which interprets politics as a phase of religion; and in the workshop of the ivied cottage scarcely a day passed without the latest phase of the political situation coming under review. Frequent and sharp was the clash of arms on that rustic hearth.

So far back as he can remember, Mr. Lloyd George breathed the invigorating air of this village Parliament, and when but a mere lad he became a regular and an interested spectator of its combats. It often fell to his lot, alternately with his uncle, to read out to the assembled company the leading articles in the London and Liverpool dailies, and then to translate them to such of his auditors as were untutored in the

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English tongue. But Richard Lloyd's workshop stood in the village for something more than the arena of theological and political discussions. It was a kind of city of refuge—where the harassed and the persecuted were accustomed to come with the story of their grievances. Tenant farmer and artisan instinctively turned to the village shoemaker in the hour of need for advice and sympathy, and never was he known to fail. He was a kind of poor man's lawyer, blending a maturity of judgment with a kindness of heart which nerved many a man to contend afresh with his difficulties. To him, as he sat in his workshop, toiling at the task that brought daily sustenance for the fatherless children that were under his roof, came the dispirited farmers, helpless over devastation to the crops by the jealously guarded game, and groaning under heavy financial obligations that were visibly crushing them. The story of their grievances was rehearsed time and again with a dramatic vividness that both saddened and incensed the circle of sympathetic listeners, amongst whom there was none more eager than the young lad, Lloyd George. "Never shall I forget," he has confessed, "the harrowing narratives I heard when a mere boy—told thousands of times—of excessive rents and goading oppressions. They are among the traditions of my childhood."

As the lad listened, his horizon widened, the fire of indignation burned more and more vehemently until there was fostered in him a fixed resolve "to do," as one of his early associates once heard him say, "something some

day for these poor fellows." Certain it is that it was in his uncle's workshop—listening to the heart-breaking narratives of a cowed peasantry—that there was first generated in him the spirit and mission of the reformer. He had as vivid a vision as had Mazzini when he declared : " I see the people pass before my eyes in the livery of wretchedness and political subjection, ragged and hungry, but I lift myself to the vision of the future and behold the people rising in its majesty, un-goaded by wretchedness, awed by the consciousness of its rights and duties." " Look at our villages," Mr. Lloyd George exclaimed some years afterwards, " There is the squire, with his retinue dependent for their daily bread upon him, with his hundreds of tenants all straining every effort to please him, with his parks—with his very sport —protected by law. What need has that little prince for protection ? I will tell you who needs protection, and that immediately. It is the poor old farm labourer who, after a life of hard toil on his ten shillings a week, is now tottering down the path to a pauper's rest." The child is ever the father of the man, and this sympathetic impulse has its genesis in those sad memories amongst which his early boyhood had been spent.

Added to the carking cares and the depressing difficulties of his neighbours, Mr. Richard Lloyd had an anxiety of his own which haunted him again and again. What was to become of this young nephew of his—so bright of intelligence, so restless of energy ? From the outset the lad had taken rank as the sharpest and cleverest lad in the village

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school. The time was fast approaching when the problem of his future would have to be faced and the decision made.

One solution had already presented itself. Both the rector and the schoolmaster had urged that he should be trained for the scholastic profession. "I recall," to quote Mr. Lloyd George's words in after years, "that in the little village school which I used to attend, I sat side by side with a lad who is to-day a Canon of the Church of England. He was then a Calvinistic Methodist, but he wanted to become a teacher. Had he stuck to his faith he would have been a miller like his father. One of the Welsh bishops to-day hails from that corner of Carnarvonshire. He too was once a Nonconformist lad. Had I followed his example and renounced the faith I was reared in, I should certainly be a Vicar and perhaps a Canon by now." "No, a Bishop," called out that anonymous "voice," that so invariably chimes in at the opportune moment and gives articulate utterance to the feelings of the audience.

The exclamation doubtlessly truly gauged the force of probabilities, but even the absolute certainty of so exalted a position would have served only to intensify the opposition of the staunch and veteran Baptist of Rose Cottage against the suggestion that his young nephew should become a teacher in a Church school. Had Mr. Lloyd George been associated with any other sect among the Nonconformists, it is certain, as he confesses, that he would have been trained for

the Nonconformist ministry. In Wales, more than in any other country, especially at the time of Mr. Lloyd George's boyhood, the pulpit was pre-eminently the one main outlet for the genius of the nation—the sphere where its most gifted youth found their readiest opportunity and their highest influence. And so to Mr. Lloyd George, with that inborn gift of his for ready speech and his ingrained eagerness for public life, the pulpit held out an immediate and a magnificent chance. There was only one difficulty—but it was insuperable. He was associated with the one sect in Nonconformity that had no paid ministry of its own. A ministerial career in his own denomination was impracticable. He was therefore forced by the pressure of his circumstances to choose some other calling which would enable him to secure his livelihood.

It was on that choice that the problem hinged. Great gates turn on small hinges, and momentous decisions are often determined by what appear to be trivial considerations. The mother recalled that one of the best men that her husband had known and respected was a solicitor in Liverpool. He had proved himself a true friend to the schoolmaster, and many were the memorials of his friendship. In the haze of those grateful memories, the man and his calling became indistinguishable with the result that for the widowed mother the legal profession became apotheosized. And so there was fostered in her a strong desire to see her son become a lawyer. Her brother, however,—the foster father of the lad—was anxious

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to see him become a doctor, and he urged this suggestion upon the consideration of both mother and son. Imagination conjures up the scene of Mr. Lloyd George as a medical man—driving in a dog-cart along those lonely roads as he made for homestead after homestead to alleviate pain and to battle with disease. “I have no doubt,” the writer remarked to one of Mr. Lloyd George’s closest associates, “that he would be always discussing politics even with his patients.” The reply was significant: “He would not have remained here long. He would be too restless and too ambitious. He would come out top and find his way to Harley Street.”

But the boy himself would not entertain the idea of becoming a doctor. The sensitiveness of his temperament made him shrink back from contact with human suffering, and so the mother’s desire prevailed. There was, however, one great difficulty in the choice of the Law. It was that of the heavy expense which it would involve. But by dint of self sacrifice and the most rigid economy, Richard Lloyd had been able to save just a few hundred pounds as adequate provision for those declining years when he would be no longer able to pursue his daily task at the little bench. These savings he ungrudgingly set aside for the preparation of his young nephew for the Law. Well might Mr. Lloyd George, as he reviewed the trodden path in later years, acknowledge with undisguised gratitude: “I can never tell how much I owed to this good man. He never married, but he set himself the

task of educating the children of his sister as a supreme and sacred duty. To that duty he devoted his time, his energy and all his savings."

The initial problem of the expense having been solved, another presented itself in reference to the necessary preparation of the lad for his examination. There were no facilities in the village, and the old uncle was not in a position to secure the services of a coach. But necessity is ever the mother of invention, and to strong hearts difficulties exist only to be overcome. The shoemaker forgot his own advanced years, and with an enthusiasm that one would only associate with youth, he set himself to master the principles of the Law and to learn French, in order to be in a position to direct the studies of the young hopeful. "My poor uncle and myself," Mr. Lloyd George has said, "used to sit for hours together and laboriously spell out of an old French dictionary and out of a grammar the rudiments of a language. It was for both of us a painful and a difficult way of learning." But in spite of the difficulty, the old man and the young lad together trod the steep path of learning and achievement.

Success followed in the hard path of their labours. At the early age of fourteen, the lad passed the Law Preliminary Examination, and at the age of sixteen he was duly articled to a firm of solicitors in the thriving seaport town of Portmadoc. Mr. Lloyd George would be the first to acknowledge that, were it not for the passionate devotion and unwearied sacrifice, the unremitting zeal and ardour, with which the old uncle directed and inspired his studies, he would not be in the high position he occupies

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to-day. That he would by sheer force of his own innate genius have succeeded in whatever sphere he may have entered goes without saying, but still the fact remains that for the want of that initial impulse and opportunity which his uncle's sacrifice and devotion created for him, his sphere would necessarily have been a very limited one, and he might have been numbered among village Hampdens, the music of whose native eloquence the world has never been privileged to hear.

The old man lives on, hale and hearty, with all his force unabated. He has been more than a father to the orphan children, for years ago the mother followed the father to the grave. Now when Mr. Lloyd George returns from the scene of his Parliamentary triumphs to the old home at Criccieth, the first man who greets him on the railway platform is ever that faithful uncle, and it is an interesting fact that, when Mr. Lloyd George received the first intimation of his appointment to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, one of the attractions of the position that first appealed to him was the fact that it carried with it residence in Downing Street. "My dear old uncle," he explained "will be so proud to come and stay at the house in which Gladstone—his great hero—at one time lived. For him the very associations of the place will become inspiring memories."

In the trail of his uncle's influence there followed other formative forces which became potent factors in the development of his innate powers. "All the best training I ever had," he declared in an address a short time back, "was in a Sunday School. It

is what has chiefly enabled me to do my work as President of the Board of Trade." The tribute was as deserved as it was magnificent. The reader must remember that in Wales the Sunday School is a much more popular institution than it is in England. It is attended by adults as well as by children, and the scholars take as active and important a part as the teachers. Seldom does the teacher give a set lesson. His function is rather to provoke debate and encourage discussion. These discussions were among the most fruitful as they were the earliest influences in stimulating Mr. Lloyd George's dialectical capabilities. Without being nominally its teacher, the class was really his. No one could equal him in the skill with which he was accustomed to sustain a discussion or to argue a point. The adults would note with approval his mental alertness and the adroitness with which he could vanquish an opponent.

But even a Welsh Sunday School did not afford sufficient scope for his inborn love of dialectics. He therefore joined a Debating Society in the town of Portmadoc, and here on one evening in each week he would find unspeakable delight in crossing swords with kindred spirits. In the summer of 1882 the Egyptian crisis culminated in a recourse to arms and in the bombardment of Alexandria by English warships. When the Portmadoc Debating Society resumed its session in the autumn, it was inevitable that the event should furnish the youthful debaters with a fruitful theme for a keen debate. The following paragraph,

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culled from an issue of the *North Wales Observer* of that period, will be read with interest: "Those persons that were in ignorance respecting the causes which led to the late war in Egypt would have done well to have visited the Portmadoc Debating Society at its recent meeting. There was a debate on the war, and some of the speeches were excellent, especially the speech of Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. George, in a most eloquent harangue, full of clenching arguments, denounced the war as a wicked one. He showed that the Suez Canal was in no danger at the hands of Arabi, and that the Khedive, Tewfik Pasha, was as guilty of revolt as Arabi Pasha was, because the latter was not dismissed by him till he saw that the army had gone over to Arabi. The foreign control was a great injustice to the Egyptians. The peasants of the country were being driven to the greatest poverty by the shameful taxation imposed by the rotten government of the country upon them. They were glad to have any man come and deliver them from their pitiful state. Arabi Pasha was a man that had risen from amongst them—a man that knew all about their wants because he had felt those wants himself."

The paragraph is as important as it is interesting. It embodies the first report in print of Mr. Lloyd George's speeches. Further, it affords a striking illustration of the inherent truth of the adage of the child being the father of the man, for in this early effort of a youthful debater, with its denunciation of war and its ardent championship of an oppressed nationality, there are to be found the

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first impulses of that spirit which marked Mr. Lloyd George's subsequent career, and made him in later years the best known and the most trenchant opponent to war throughout the land.

CHAPTER THREE

BECOMES A LAWYER

DURING his five years' articleship, he devoted himself with zest to his legal studies and at the same time followed his natural bent in his love for general literature. He read with the keenest avidity Rollins' *Ancient History*. Macaulay's *History of England* and Carlyle's "*Sartor Resartus*" captivated him, the one by its glitter of phrase and the other by its philosophic insight. Ruskin was added to the list of favourites, and before the young clerk had reached his fifteenth birthday he had read again and again "*The Crown of Wild Olive*" and "*Sesame and Lilies*." It would be impossible to overestimate the influence of these authors upon the lad's mind. They are still to be marked in his deftness as a phrase-maker, and in that literary finish and choiceness of diction which are outstanding features of his speeches. In a home steeped with the traditions and influences of Puritanism, works of fiction were rigorously tabooed, but Richard Lloyd had on his shelves a selection of the poets and essayists of Wales, and these his young nephew read and re-read until he had become so thoroughly familiar with them that he could quote them at will.

His fondness for reading, however, was not allowed to wean him from the dull routine of a lawyer's office. He revelled in the archaic phraseology of musty parchments and displayed such alertness and keenness of interest that

he became the first favourite with the head of the firm. A prominent Welsh bard has been heard to say that on one occasion when visiting that office, his attention was directed to the young clerk. "Mark that lad," exclaimed the lawyer to his client, "he will become one of the leading men of the land some day. He has the quickest and sharpest mind of any man I know."

In the year 1884, when only twenty-one years of age, Mr. Lloyd George passed the necessary examinations and qualified as a solicitor. But the money spent on his articles and on the Government stamp, the heavy expenses involved in the purchase of the necessary and costly law books, and the cost of the journeys to Liverpool and to London for the examinations, had left the exchequer utterly exhausted. He had not enough money at hand to buy the robes—which cost three guineas, and without which he could not practise in the courts. He has confessed that he had to wait till he had had some office work before he was in a position to meet the outlay which would enable him to take up advocacy. While waiting, however, for his robes, he fortified himself with Abraham Lincoln's sterling advice, which he had stumbled across in the course of his reading: "There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief. Never stir up litigation. As a peacemaker, the lawyer has a supreme opportunity of being a good man." Copying out these words, he placed them at the head of his desk—henceforth



MR. LLOYD GEORGE AT THE
AGE OF SIXTEEN.



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to be the watchwords of his calling and career. How fully he mastered these precepts, and in after years realized the high and beneficent purpose of the peace-maker, his great triumph over the railway crisis has magnificently revealed.

It is a favourite maxim that sooner or later the goddess of Fortune knocks at every man's door. She came early in Mr. Lloyd George's career, and she was accorded a ready and an eager welcome. In Llanfrothen—a little village at the foot of Snowdon—a poor quarryman, who was on the border of death, sent for the Nonconformist minister and confided in him his desire to be interred in the grave in the churchyard where his little girl had been laid to rest some years back, and he expressed a further desire that the rites of his own Nonconformist church should be performed over the grave. Shortly afterwards the man died and the relatives gave notice to the Rector of the desire of the dead man to be buried in the grave of his child. The desire was readily acceded to and the grave duly opened. The day before the funeral, the Nonconformist minister, mindful of the dying man's request, gave notice under the Osborne Morgan Burial Act—an Act which had been passed in that current Parliament to empower Nonconformists to bury their dead in churchyards under the exercise of their own ministrations—that the Nonconformist rites would be observed and that the Rector's services would therefore not be required. But the Rector resented what he regarded as the outrage of being served with legal notice, and he decided upon retaliatory action. Prevented as

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he was by the provisions of this new enactment from forbidding burial in the churchyard, he claimed the right of deciding the precise spot where the dead should be buried. He ordered the sexton therefore to close up the grave and open another in a lessolate corner of the churchyard, which had been set aside by local custom for the burial of suicides. Naturally, the relatives indignantly resented such action. They consulted Mr. Lloyd George and instructed him to act in their behalf.

The issues at stake appealed to the young solicitor, and he threw himself into the fray with an intensity of ardour that far exceeded mere professional considerations. He ferreted amid the archives of the parish, and after spending a whole night in rummaging over the records, he discovered that, so far back as the year 1864, a plot of ground was given as an addition to the parish churchyard, that no stipulation of any kind was attached to the gift ; that it was enclosed by a stone wall erected at the cost of the parishioners in general, without any distinction of sect or denomination, and that for seventeen years it was occupied on behalf of the parish without any doubt of any kind being entertained that it was parish property in the fullest sense. The young solicitor therefore contended that the Vicar had no legal right to treat the burial ground as absolute Church property, and he advised the villagers to assemble in force at the entrance to the graveyard and demand admittance as a right, and, said he, with a defiant gleam in his eye, " Should the Vicar refuse to open the gates, then break down the wall which your sub-criptions have

built, force your way into the churchyard, re-open the grave and bury the old man by his daughter.” Such heroic advice readily appealed to the infuriated quarrymen, and the advice was obeyed to the letter. Legal proceedings ensued. First of all, an action for trespass and damages was entered in the County Court. Mr. Lloyd George made a brilliant speech in defence, which evoked a storm of applause in the body of the Court and moved the jury to bring in an immediate verdict in favour of his clients. But the County Court judge waived aside the verdict on a point of law, and decided in favour of the Rector, to whom he awarded damages and costs. An appeal was lodged at the High Court before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge and Mr. Justice Manisty, who quashed the judgment of the Court below, and justified the violence of the infuriated villagers as the legitimate assertion of their legal rights. The young solicitor who had scored so remarkable a triumph instantly became a hero, and on every hand his praises were sung.

The exigencies of space forbid any detailed references to those forensic triumphs which immediately secured for him one of the largest practices in North Wales. One or two instances, however, may be recalled as marking that inborn quality of absolute fearlessness which has been such an asset to him throughout his career. On one occasion he appeared in the Magistrate’s Court in opposition to the renewal of a license. He based his objection mainly on the fact that the publichouse in question was no longer required to supply the needs of the community, as three out of the four slate quarries

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in the district had been closed, and there were only ten men now working there. The presiding magistrate declared Mr. Lloyd George's contention to be altogether irrelevant. It was no use occupying the time of the Bench with such an argument.

Mr. Lloyd George : "I have only spoken for five minutes and you have interrupted me. You want to suppress me before hearing what I have to say."

The Magistrate (sarcastically) "It depends upon us whether we shall listen to you."

Mr. Lloyd George : "But you are bound to listen."

The Magistrate : "How can you say that this publichouse has been the means of closing three publichouses?"

Mr. Lloyd George : "I am not aware that such an idea has entered the mind of any man—sane or insane—within this Court."

The Magistrate (indignantly) : "There never was such language used in this Court before by an advocate. The expression is evidently intended for the Bench, and you must withdraw it."

Mr. Lloyd George : "I will do nothing of the kind. The expression used by me was 'sane or insane.' Now how can *that* be said to apply to you on the Bench more than to anyone else?"

The logic of the question was irresistible, and, adds the report, "Mr. Lloyd George was allowed to proceed."

On another occasion he appeared in Court to defend a number of quarrymen who were charged by the Board of River Conservators with unlawfully

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fishing with nets in the Nantlle Lake. Mr. Lloyd George contended that the lake was not a river within the terms of the law, and that therefore the Bench had no jurisdiction in the matter. "That is a question," retorted the presiding Magistrate in a most pompous manner, "that will be decided in a Superior Court."

Mr. Lloyd George: "Yes, and that will be a perfectly just and unbiased Court too."

The Magistrate: "If that remark of Mr. Lloyd George is meant as a reflection upon any magistrate sitting upon this Bench, I hope that he will name him. A more insulting remark to the Bench I have never heard during the whole course of my experience as a magistrate."

Mr. Lloyd George (warmly): "But a truer remark was never made in this Court."

The Magistrate (sternly): "Tell me to whom you are referring. I must insist upon you to refer by name to any magistrate sitting here."

Mr. Lloyd George: "Then I may say that I refer to you in particular." (Sensation).

The Magistrate (rising): "I leave the chair after an expression of that kind. This is the first time in my life that I have been so treated in a Court of Justice."

The remaining magistrates called upon the dauntless young advocate to withdraw, and declared that they were not prepared to allow the case to proceed unless he tendered an apology. His reply was immediate and emphatic: "It will be all the better for my clients if you do abandon the case."

His fearlessness was acclaimed in the public Press as destined to have a most wholesome effect of causing "the great unpaid" to show a little more regard for the safety of man and a shade less for the welfare of loaves and fishes."

But there was too much public spirit in him to permit all his energies to be absorbed by the demands of his profession. "It is as natural for a Welshman to take to politics," he once declared, "as it is for a duck to take to the water." The inborn propensities in this direction soon asserted themselves. In those early days of his professional career, the Principality was in the throes of the anti-tithe struggle—a movement among Welsh Nonconformist farmers for the avowed purpose of ridding themselves of the obligation of the payment of tithe to the clergy of the Established Church. The agitation crystallised into an organisation modelled after the fashion of the Irish Land League. One of the natural heroes of the struggle—a John Parry, of Llanarmon—made a tour of South Carnarvonshire for the purpose of establishing branches of the newly formed Anti-Tithe League. Mr. Lloyd George was appointed the secretary of the South Carnarvonshire district. He took up the work with characteristic zeal and accompanied Mr. Thomas Gee—long known as the Grand Old Man of Wales—on a crusade through the county for the purpose of forming branches in all the various parishes and hamlets.

Notwithstanding all the demands upon his time and services, there was still a surplus of unconsumed energy, with the result that

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to his efforts in the interest of Land Reform he linked that of Temperance Reform. A life-long abstainer, he eagerly availed himself of every opportunity to urge forward the interests of national sobriety. Night after night he would address temperance meetings in the surrounding towns and villages, and throughout the countryside his fame spread as one of the most earnest and eloquent of temperance orators. But his activities soon widened out into broader channels. The Local Government Act was coming into force, and in Wales especially the greatest preparations were being made for the forthcoming County Council elections. The cry went forth that these contests were to be fought on strictly political lines, and immediately the opposing forces set themselves in battle array. The young lawyer of Criccieth discerned, with characteristic insight, the significance of the struggle, and he threw himself into it with a frenzied zeal. He visited almost every district in the county, and his speeches became rousing appeals to the peasantry to avail themselves of so magnificent an opportunity to shake off the old feudal yoke of squirearchy and to work out their own salvation. "Mr. Lloyd George is ubiquitous in this struggle," declared a newspaper correspondent, "and there are several of the candidates who will owe their seats to his strenuous efforts on their behalf."

In Carnarvonshire, as in the other Welsh counties, the victory at the polls proved a triumph for the peasants, and the old order of administration passed away. "It is a Revolution," Mr. Lloyd

George exultingly exclaimed, " a Revolution in the sense of Victor Hugo, who when asked for a definition, replied, ' Revolution ! call it progress, and progress to-morrow.' The day of the squire has now gone, and the grand to-morrow has set in for Wales." His own part in securing such a triumph was fully acknowledged, and at the first meeting of the Carnarvonshire Council, his name figured in the batch of the newly elected Aldermen. He was thus the youngest Alderman in the land, a fact which led the late Mr. Raikes, M.P., to dub him "the boy Alderman." Among his aldermanic colleagues was Mr. A. D. Acland. Little did the farmers and peasants who constituted that first Council divine that they had secured in two of their aldermen the counsel and services of two future Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Lloyd George from the outset refused to regard these newly formed Councils as mere parochial institutions created for the limited purpose of attending merely to main roads and public bridges. He saw in them the living germ of miniature Parliaments, and he set himself the congenial task of nurturing and developing it. He brought before the Carnarvonshire Council a resolution : " That in the opinion of this County Council, it is desirable to form a County Council Association for the whole of Wales, and that the various County Councils be invited to appoint three members each from their bodies for the purpose of conferring together for the establishment of such an Association." He confessed that his idea was to obtain the transfer to

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the new body of such powers of the Government departments as are authorised to be transferred by Clause 10 of the Local Government Act.

The Conservative minority on the Council opposed such a resolution on the ground that it lay outside the jurisdiction and powers of a County Council. At another meeting he moved a resolution embodying an expression of approval of the action of the Cardiganshire County Council in seeking to make the cost of distraining for tithes an imperial and not a local charge. He contended that as the establishment of the Church in Wales was maintained by England, the cost of collecting an impost obnoxious to the people of Wales ought to be borne by the imperial exchequer. When Lord Salisbury's Government appointed a Royal Commission to report upon the working of the Welsh Sunday Closing Act, Mr. Lloyd George immediately submitted to the Council a strongly worded resolution declaring approval of the Act, and demanding its extension by the abolition of the *bonâ-fide* clause and the imposition on clubs of such restrictions as apply to publichouses.

On another occasion he brought forward a motion in support of the principle of Leasehold Enfranchisement, and urged its adoption on the ground that Wales expected a great deal from the County Councils, and that if they did not do something beyond the mere duties prescribed by the Local Government Board, the country would be disappointed in them. On all these occasions the minority on the Council protested against all such resolutions

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as altogether beyond the prescribed scope and function of a County Council. Mr. Lloyd George, one speaker complained, was constantly goading their Council to interfere in matters that belonged exclusively to the province of Parliament. These resolutions of his were as inexplicable and as baffling to some of those county magnates as are the movements of ducklings to the foster hen when they make for the mill pond ; but in the one case, as in the other, the impelling force is to be found in inborn instinct. Little did those venerable councillors, concerned only for parish pumps and village greens, reck that these resolutions bearing upon matters of national import, which the boy alderman was constantly submitting to their consideration, marked the first lispings of an embryonic statesman who was destined in later years to fill a position in the Cabinet second only to that of the Premiership.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADVOCATES WELSH NATIONALISM

IN the early sixties, the late Henry Richard, afterwards known to fame as the Apostle of Peace, wrote a series of Letters and Essays dealing with the social and political condition of Wales. "What"—he wrote—"is the present state of the Parliamentary representation of Wales? If by that term we understand that those who go to the House of Commons are supposed to represent the principles, the conditions and the interests and the aspirations of the community in whose name they sit, then it must be pronounced that the representation of the Principality is a mere burlesque upon the very idea of representation." "Certain great families," continued Mr. Richard, "who, by tradition or accident rather than from conviction, had come to espouse one side or the other in politics, held it a matter of hereditary honour to contest the representation with each other, far less as a means of giving any effect to any particular views of State policy than of asserting and maintaining their own family consequence against rival claimants in a county or neighbourhood."

The indictment, as true as it was severe, roused the Welsh people from their lethargy, and at the General Election of 1868 a determined effort was made to bring "the burlesque" to an end. The Welsh people claimed their heritage, and "political rights" was made the war cry of the struggle. It proved a titanic contest. The tradesman sacrificed

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custom, the labourer his hire, the cottager his home and the peasant his holding, but no sacrifice was considered too costly to be laid on the nation's altar. It is an interesting fact that Mr. Lloyd George's first political memory dates back to this memorable contest of 1868. He vividly recalls how as a youngster of five he strutted about the village waving a flag in honour of the people's candidate.

The striking feature of that epoch-making contest was undoubtedly the triumphant election of Henry Richard himself. Until then, hardly one of the Welsh members had understood the language of the people they represented, and a political meeting addressed in Welsh by a Parliamentary candidate was absolutely unknown. When therefore Henry Richard commenced his political campaign in the Merthyr Boroughs by addressing the electors in their own Cymric tongue, the thrilling effect was felt throughout the whole Principality. He was hailed as "the morning star of the political reformation of Wales"—the harbinger of a new epoch in which the long deferred needs of the nation would find full satisfaction in the shape of religious equality, better land laws, and a better system of education. The "morning star" continued to shine, bright and clear,—but the long-hoped-for dawn tarried.

For well nigh twenty years, on the floor of St. Stephen's, Henry Richard fought almost single-handed his country's cause, and that with a zeal and a devotion that won for him the appellative of "the Member for Wales." To the degree the hopes

and the expectations of the Welsh people had risen in the great political upheaval of '68, to that degree they found themselves in the eighties bitterly and miserably disappointed. There was no appreciable difference in the quality and qualifications of the typical Welsh member in the "sixties" and that in the early "eighties." Miss Rathbone, in her memoir of her father,—for many years one of the Parliamentary representatives of Wales—draws a graphic picture of the condition of things, all oblivious of its real significance. "Three fourths of the people"—to quote her description—"attended political meetings in Wales—farmers and quarrymen with their wives and children—all listening in breathless silence to speeches in what was to most of them an unknown tongue, and their breaking out into eager responsiveness when the minister or the schoolmaster reported what had been said, bit by bit, in Welsh."

In the realm of politics, as in that of biology, an inappropriate hybridism leads to sterilization. The programme of political reforms which the Welsh people had handed as their mandate to their Parliamentary representatives at the epoch-making struggle of '68—at the cost of much persecution and many heart breaking evictions—was at the end of twenty years still the programme before the country. Nothing had been done: not a single item in the programme had been realised. So marked was the failure that even an outsider like Lord Randolph Churchill could not refrain from referring to it in lachrymose terms. Speaking in 1889 at Newtown—a little Welsh town nestling

amid the hills in the very heart of Wales—he pointed out that ever since 1868 Wales had returned to Parliament a large majority of Liberal members and the Welsh people had been steadfast and devoted in supporting them. But what, asked Lord Randolph with characteristic incisiveness, had Wales received in return? “No special attention,” he declared “has been given to Welsh grievances, requirements or wants. All that Wales has received is a Bill permitting the burial of Non-conformists in consecrated ground. That is the solitary service done to Wales, and even that is shared by the whole of the United Kingdom as well.”

Every session, Mr. Dillwyn, the veteran member for Swansea, with a doggedness that was impervious to official rebuffs, was accustomed to bring forward his resolution in favour of the Dis-establishment of the Church in Wales. The resolution was an anaemic visitor which made its appearance invariably in a thin House, supported by pointless and lifeless speeches. Even Mr. Gladstone, who, in his devotion to his Parliamentary duties as Leader of the House, was always to be found at his post, took to running away from the wearisomeness of the annual Welsh night. But at last there appeared on the political horizon of Wales a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand and there was heard the sound as of distant thunder that heralded the coming of a storm. Dissatisfaction with the supineness of the Welsh members began to find expression in the Press. “How is it,” it was asked, “that pre sing Welsh

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matters receive so little attention by both Liberal and Conservative Governments ? When much attention is paid year by year to the affairs of Ireland and Scotland, Wales is sent empty away and is treated with contempt. Ireland and Scotland receive attention because their representatives give trouble if they do not get what they want. But the pressing needs of Wales are shelved because her representatives are so easily put aside, and are afraid of adopting a mode of warfare in Parliament after the fashion of the other members. Time and again have the Irish and Scotch members insisted upon taking up the whole time of the House for several nights in succession for the discussion of Irish and Scotch subjects, but when in the history of Parliament have the Welsh members done anything of the kind ?"

"We are bold enough," chimed in another journal of influence, "to declare that whatever has been done in the past Wales will never again send this class of 'silent members' to Parliament, and if neither friendly cajoling nor sharp probing and goading will stir them up, the abuse of neglected duty should, one would think, induce them to retire and make room for others, stronger and abler than themselves. They should be made alive to the fact that there is now going on in Wales, while they are dozing in Parliament, an under-current of advanced and aggressive thought that will in the immediate future break out in an upheaving revolution, sweeping and decisive in its effects."

And so the storm gathered, and the rumblings

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of dissatisfaction and unrest grew clearer and stronger.

Early in 1885, Mr. Michael Davitt came on a visit to the Principality, and he addressed a meeting of Welsh quarrymen at Blaenau Festiniog. Home Rule had not then been espoused by the Liberal Party, with the result that the local political leaders held aloof from association with the Irish agitator. At the close of Davitt's address, the chairman, bereft of support on the platform, invited anyone in the audience to move the customary vote of thanks. With that, up jumped a young fellow, and in stirring tones he expressed the gratitude of the meeting to the Irish patriot. He was followed by another young Welshman who spoke in a similar strain. In the course of a vigorous speech which caused considerable enthusiasm, he said that Wales would do well to emulate the example set by Ireland on the choice of her Parliamentary representatives. Formerly, Irishmen depended on men of title who were supposed to possess great influence in London, and their only reward was an occasional dry bone flung to them from the Government offices. But they discovered their mistake and they remedied it. They now elected men of their own flesh and blood to do battle for their country on the floor of St. Stephens, and they had succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations in an astonishingly short space of time. "They have obtained," continued the young orator, "Land Acts for their peasantry which have cut down the excessive rents; they have obtained from the public

exchequer hundreds of thousands of pounds to construct railways and tramroads, to drain land and to execute public works ; and all this, not through the medium of men of great influence in London, but through sheer fighting, step by step, in the teeth of the most tremendous opposition. Whatever be our opinion as to the ultimate aim of the Irish policy, there can be no two opinions about the success of their parliamentary tactics. That is the policy for us. I do not believe that in the long run it pays us to send our representatives crawling up the back stairs of the Government offices in Westminster to fall on their knees before every scribbler there who draws his pay from the public purse in order to beseech as alms for concessions which we ought to demand as our right. As a Welshman, I protest against my fellow countrymen merely picking up the crumbs that fall from the Government tables when they have a full right to partake of the feast ; hanging about the gate to snap the leavings of the banqueting hall may be good enough for dogs, but it is the privilege of every free man to enjoy a seat at the board."

The speaker was no other than Mr. Lloyd George, while his *confrere* was Mr. Tom Ellis. At that time they were known only as ardent young politicians who were taking to politics with all the earnestness of a living faith. Davitt was completely captivated by these two young men—by their raciness of speech, by their passionate devotion to politics, and by the ardour of their democratic sympathies. Wales, he declared could never hope to come to

her own until she set about substituting the gifted sons of her people for the drowsy country squires that were now misrepresenting her in Parliament. "If these two young fellows were in Ireland," he continued, "they would have been sent to represent the people in Parliament, and if you in Wales are wise, you will send them there at the very first chance." The opportunity came soon for that constituency, for in the following year Mr. Tom Ellis was elected for Merionethshire. His election marked the advent of that new era for which Wales had waited so long.

Never before had the Welsh people so thoroughly representative a spokesman as they had in this young son of the soil when he took his seat at Westminster. He was the first of the new order—a Welshman cradled in the traditions of his native land—speaking the Cymric tongue in all its pristine purity—nourished in the faith of his fathers and passionately devoted to the cause and interests of Wales as a lover to a maid. He conducted the whole of his campaign in the Welsh language and proclaimed, in accents clear and strong that made the Welsh hills reverberate with their resonance, the gospel of Welsh national unity. "We are often taunted," he exclaimed in passionate tones, "with being a small people numbering altogether not more than two million souls, but we are determined to do all that in us lies to make them the finest and completest two million souls on God's earth. Girt by cruel foes and in face of overwhelming dangers and threatening calamities, our forefathers closed

up their ranks and stood shoulder to shoulder, calling themselves 'Cymry'—compatriots—brothers in the same race and sharers of a common fate. Now after the storm and stress of centuries, after a chequered history full of dark days and suffering, we are still buoyed up by the hope of our nationality. Our language is the oldest language in Western Europe—grown up with our people, moulded by their emotions, sorrows and hopes, coloured by the natural beauty of the land, a language as sweet as music and strong as the wave on the sea-shore." His speeches breathed the spirit of the people, and gave articulate utterance to national aspirations that had long been struggling for fitting expression.

The news of his triumphant return to Parliament swept over the Principality like a sheet of fire. The tenant farmer's son became a national hero, and his portrait adorned the walls of the cottars' homes. There was not a spot in Wales that did not feel the thrilling touch of his triumph, and for the great mass of the Welsh people politics became henceforth transformed from a pastime into a passion. The first and most immediate result of Ellis' election to Parliament was the impulse it created in other Welsh constituencies to secure representatives pledged to act on the lines laid down by the young hero of Merioneth. Carmarthenshire and Mid-Glamorgan were not long in following the heroic example of selecting young men from amongst themselves to represent them.

But there was no constituency that lent so ready an ear to this new gospel of the national unity of

Wales as the Carnarvon Boroughs. No town has played so important a part in Welsh history as has the town of Carnarvon. From the days of the Romans to the stirring times of Glyndwr, it was the chief centre of Cymric resistance to every foreign invasion, whether Roman, Saxon or Norman. It represents the highest type of a purely Welsh town. Nowhere in the Principality can be found a locality which exhibits more truly the salient features of Welsh life or maintains the Welsh language in more constant use and greater purity. Welsh is the language of the mart as well as of the sanctuary, and the very streets are vibrant with the pure idioms of the children as they revel in their play. But over against Carnarvon in the composition of these Boroughs is the cathedral city of Bangor, representing forces and influences at variance with those that predominate in the sister town of Carnarvon. The constituency is thus subject to the constant sway of two opposing tides, two different races, two different creeds, two different languages, two different influences,—each fiercely contending for supremacy over the other. Synchronising with the triumphant election of Mr. Tom Ellis for Merionethshire, an English barrister was returned for the Carnarvon Boroughs, who was diametrically opposed to those Cymric ideals which young Ellis had inscribed on the national banner of Wales. The spoils of the victor had fallen to Bangor, and Carnarvon, restive under the defeat, could only wait until the opportunity came for the renewal of the struggle.

In the meantime, they set themselves to

prepare for the fray by choosing a champion who should do battle for them. Several names were suggested, but they were set aside on the ground that being unversed in the vernacular they were incapable of touching the heart of the Welsh electors, and so were incapable of inspiring the needful enthusiasm to ensure victory. "What sort of man do we require as the Parliamentary representative of these Boroughs?" asked a local newspaper in its editorial columns, and it proceeded to answer its own question. "A countryman once asked his neighbour to explain to him the then new invention—the telegraph—which the neighbour did in the following manner: 'Suppose a dog long enough to reach from York to London. When the tail is pinched in York, the dog barks in London. That's the way it works.' Now that is the kind of man we want in these Boroughs. When we are pinched and pressed in Wales, our representative should cry in London. In fact, he should be a part of our nervous political system in such a way that we could not be hurt without his feeling it. We ought to be able to say with Antony: 'When the poor have cried, Cæsar has wept.' But before he can possess this qualification he must be first and foremost a Welshman and a patriot. He must possess a mind brimful of national aspirations and a heart touched with a live coal from the altar on which our forefathers have been sacrificed. He must also be a man with courage to speak, and not afraid to be laughed at. He must be inspired with a patriotic enthusiasm which would

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subordinate all other considerations—personal or party—to the promotion of his country's interests. He must also be a good speaker—a man who can represent to the English Parliament the grievances of his people in an effective manner. One good speaker is worth to a country fifty such drawling stammerers as the ordinary members of Parliament are."

The standard of requirement was an exceedingly high one, but in far less time than the editor had anticipated the requirements were fulfilled, for in the following week's issue it was stated that "in political circles in Carnarvonshire no little stir had been made by the announcement that Mr. Lloyd George was being spoken of as the probable candidate for the Boroughs." "We are disposed to treat the report of the selection as premature," continued the editor, "although we should be only too happy to verify it, recognising in Mr. Lloyd George an able politician, one conversant with the wants of Wales, with the needs and aspirations of his countrymen, and one who, there is no doubt, would prove an admirable aid in Parliament to the member for Merionethshire."

The announcement proved well grounded. For some time there had been a presentiment throughout the constituency that the young solicitor at Portmadoc was destined for Parliament. Michael Jones of Bala, who was the Michael Davitt of the agrarian movement in Wales, and Dr. John Thomas, a divine who filled a commanding place in Welsh Nonconformity identical with

that of Dr. Clifford among English Nonconformists, had in the course of their respective pilgrimages in Carnarvonshire been brought into contact with the eloquent young solicitor, and each of them had been greatly impressed by the vigour of his speeches and by his masterly grasp of political questions. " You require a member for the Carnarvon Boroughs," one of them publicly declared, " you have him ready at hand in Mr. Lloyd George. Give him his chance, for he is destined to become the leader of Wales in Parliament." The rank and file caught the spirit of their leaders, and the presentiment rapidly crystallised into action in the summer of 1888 when the two small districts of Pwllheli and Nevin definitely decided upon his nomination. Before the end of the year the larger centres had so thoroughly followed in their train that the editor of the paper responsible for the movement declared that the several boroughs in the constituency had pronounced so unmistakeably and almost unanimously in favour of Mr. Lloyd George that the delegates assembling for the formal and final choice of the candidate had no option but to endorse such opinion and accept his candidature.

Early in the year 1889, the delegates met and Mr. Lloyd George was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted. There could be no doubt in regard to the planks that constituted his platform. He openly ranged himself side by side with Tom Ellis in the proclamation of the national unity of Wales and in the demand for Cymric autonomy. He soon

made it evident that he interpreted Welsh politics as a national crusade and not as a personal career, as a gospel to be proclaimed and not a mere game to be played. He accompanied Ellis on a tour through the North, and speaking at a village meeting he declared that he was glad to see signs that the democracy of Wales was making a decided progress at last. Wales had submitted quite long enough upon empty promises and flattering commendations. The day had now come when the Welsh members must be roused to their full sense of responsibility ; and to rightly represent Wales men must be had who will fight hard—face to face with Englishmen, Scotchmen and Irishmen—for the rights of Wales.

He pursued his campaign up and down the land. He attended a conference at Llandrindod convened for the purpose of forming a Welsh National Council and he moved a resolution condemning the supineness of the Welsh members during the debates on the Tithe Bill, "and having regard to the fact," the motion proceeded to state, "that this is not the only instance in which Welsh members have failed to do justice to the national cause, this conference recommends the constituencies to consider by what means a more effective representation can be secured for Wales in the House of Commons." His crusade embraced a visit to Liverpool, where, addressing the hosts of Welshmen who have settled there, he declared : "Wales cannot live on promises alone. It is all very well for Englishmen to speak of 'gallant little Wales.' At horse shows you see a first prize given to one, a second prize to another,

while the third award is just a card ' highly commended.' That is the way in which Wales has been treated. Ireland has been given first prize in a series of splendid measures. Scotland has been given second prize, while Wales, like a Welsh mountain pony, is sent away with an empty commendation."

Early in 1890, he paid his first visit to South Wales to attend a great political conference at Cardiff. Here he had a magnificent opportunity of expatiating on his favourite theme of Home Rule for Wales, and he turned it to ready account. "Welsh Home Rule alone," he declared, to the undisguised amazement of the grey bearded veterans, "can bring within the reach of this generation the fruits of its political labours. In reading the debates on Mr. Gladstone's Irish Bills," he continued, "two things struck me very forcibly. One circumstance was that all the main arguments in favour of self-government for Ireland are equally applicable to the case of Wales. The other, and to my mind the more startling feature of the comparison, is that not one of the stock objections raised by the Unionists to the conferring of autonomy upon Ireland would in the slightest degree be applicable to the proposal of a similar concession to Wales. There is the great argument of nationality. A separate nationality means separate sympathies, aims, capabilities and conditions, and therefore ought to be accompanied by a separate and distinct legislative. But if this argument holds good in the case of Ireland, doubly well does it do so in the case of Wales. Ireland has

lost one of the title deeds of her nationality—its ancient language. But Wales has preserved her charter in its integrity. Further, legislative boons have been conferred upon Ireland that would have made the fortune of little Wales. Not a single measure of primary importance has been passed by the Imperial Parliament to satisfy the special wants of Wales. It may be pointed out that there are Coercion Acts and other such facts in the history of Ireland which are not to be found in the relations of the English Parliament with Wales. But such circumstances as these are not conditions in themselves. Our phenomenal patience under injustice and wrong alone has prevented the creation for us of such evidence. We have never quarrelled with tyranny as the Irish have done. We have rather turned the other cheek to the smiter. Who can impute crime to the land of white gloves—*Hen Wlad y Menyg Gwynion?* There is no blood-stain on its whole political record. We are told that Wales will serve its own interests best by identifying itself closely with England and losing her individuality in an amalgamation with that great nation. But there is another way of looking at it. We must recollect that England is a great commercial nation—one of whose cities alone is of vastly greater political and mercantile importance than the whole of Wales. How can this immensely busy country find the time to regard the local and special interests of such an insignificant portion of its dominions, even if it had the disposition to do so. But has it displayed any such kindly inclination towards our country?

ADVOCATES WELSH NATIONALISM

On the contrary, England has not shown a disposition to guard the interests of Wales as she might have done. She has treated the loyalty of Wales with indifference and contempt. She has accorded her grievances nothing but cold neglect, and she has heaped on her institutions nothing but unmitigated derision. But there is a momentous time coming," he continued, "the dark continent of wrong is being explored: there is a missionary spirit abroad for its reclamation to the realm of right. A holy war has been proclaimed against man's inhumanity to man and the people of Europe are thronging to the crusade. The great question for us to determine is this: Whether in this mighty Armageddon Wales shall be simply the armour bearer of another nation, or shall, like *Y Ddraig Goch*, once more lead forth a nation to do battle for the right as of old. As a Welshman, I feel confident that once it is afforded the opportunity, my country will act its part honestly in the conflict. The ennobling influences of Christians have not played upon the heart for a whole century in vain. They have elevated and girded the impulses, they have awakened the fervour of her national enthusiasm. That is why I feel so sanguine that were self government conceded to Wales, she would be a model to the nationalities of the earth of a people who have driven oppression from their hill-sides, and initiated the glorious reign of freedom, justice and truth."

The *South Wales Daily News* divined with an unerring instinct that a new prophet had risen in the land, and in a leading article it joyously hailed

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him as "one destined in a no distant future period to become the pride of the Welsh people." Some years later, the young orator came again to Cardiff—but this time to receive the freedom of the city and to be greeted by the city fathers and thronging crowds as the greatest of living Welshmen.



MR. LLOYD GEORGE—AT THE
TIME OF HIS FIRST
ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT.



CHAPTER FIVE

ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT

ALREADY the Welsh people instinctively realised that in the youthful combatant for the Carnarvon Boroughs Wales had secured a national asset, and there was a feverish desire to see him in the ring. The opportunity came earlier than had been anticipated. At the end of March, in 1890, a vacancy was created by the sudden death of the sitting member, Mr. Swetenham, and immediately there ensued the keenest contest that had ever been fought in the Boroughs. The Conservatives brought forward in Mr. Ellis Nanney the strongest and best known man on their side. He was the squire of the parish in which Mr. Lloyd George had spent his boyhood, but no one had ever anticipated such a paradox of circumstance as would make of the village lad, who had long been accustomed to respectfully doff his cap as the squire drove past the little cottage on the estate, a more than formidable rival for the Parliamentary representation of that district. But, as the youthful combatant declared in explanation of so unforeseen an event, the day of the cottage bred lads had at last dawned. "I am not the son of a nobleman," he exclaimed, in opening his campaign, "I am not possessed of wealth and so able to scatter it in the constituency. Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have in the way of personal qualification and service, I am prepared

to give to the furtherance of the political interests of Wales. And in its present temper, I rejoice to think, Wales asks not what a candidate has, but what he is. The national mind is now set on measures, not on men."

The stress of the struggle, great as it would have been under normal conditions, was intensified by reason of the fact that a division of opinion and consequently of forces had set in among Mr. Lloyd George's followers. One of the leading Nonconformist divines demanded that Mr. Lloyd George should pledge himself that he would support Mr. Gladstone in his Home Rule scheme only on the condition that a measure of Disestablishment for Wales would be introduced immediately after the passing of the Home Rule Bill. Naturally, Mr. Lloyd George was not in a position to give such a pledge, with the result that the Nonconformist leader and his immediate followers remained in their tents and refused to take their part in the struggle. If only some of them had been endowed with the faculty of pre-
vision! What a vista would have been revealed to them! They would have seen what at that time would have been regarded as altogether outside the range of possibility—the self-same divine, nearly twenty years later, leading a deputation to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer to advocate the claims of the still unrealised project of Welsh Disestablishment, and finding the holder of the high office of the Exchequer to be no other than the youthful combatant of the contest of 1890. But this is only

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one of the many romances of fortune with which his public career abounds.

In due course the polling day came, the result of which disclosed the fact that Mr. Lloyd George had wrested the seat by a majority of only eighteen votes. The announcement was made amid excitement unparalleled in the history of the constituency. "The banner of the Red Dragon has been borne aloft in triumph," exclaimed the victor. On paper the majority appears exceedingly small and insignificant, but only those who knew how fierce the struggle had been knew how great a triumph that bare majority represented. "Mr. Lloyd George," declared the local journal, "has won the election in the teeth of the greatest odds through sheer force of principle and of popular enthusiasm. He came out in the teeth of considerable prejudice—prejudice based partly on his youth and inexperience, and partly on his extreme political views. He has won golden opinions among men who originally viewed his candidature with apprehension and distrust."

Terse and characteristically quaint was the description which Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who had been at Carnarvon during the contest, gave of the new member: "He is quite a young fellow: he is not a great size, but he is a plucky young fellow. He reminds me of his namesake—David, when he went out to fight Goliath. I don't exactly call him the Prince of Wales, but I do call him the Royal George."

"We doubt," declared the *Western Mail*—the Welsh Conservative daily—"whether any man

has ever entered Parliament with so many promises to fulfil as has the newly elected member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. It remains to be seen how he will acquit himself as a member of Parliament." It is as pleasing, as it is just, to note that the *Western Mail* has long since acknowledged that he has fulfilled not merely the promises of a campaign, but the highest promise of a great career, which has reflected lustre on Wales, and on his elevation to Cabinet rank it enthusiastically hailed him as Wales' greatest asset. Mr. Lloyd George took his seat in the House of Commons on the 17th of April, 1890, walking up to the table to sign the roll, escorted by his aldermanic colleague, Mr. Acland, and Mr. Stuart Rendel—now Lord Rendel—at that time the chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party.

It happened to be Budget day, and the House was, of course, crowded to its utmost capacity. The two central figures on whom the observation of the members was focused were Mr. Goschen who, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would shortly rise to expound to the House the hidden mysteries of the year's Budget. The other was Lord Randolph Churchill, who sat in a distant corner seat, silent and sullen, the pathetic figure of an erstwhile Chancellor who had never known the joy of the travail of introducing a Budget. The past and present holders of the great office so absorbed the interest of the onlookers that few paid attention to the formality of the introduction of the new member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. Here again one pauses to

reflect, if only the veil of the future had been for a moment drawn aside, and a glimpse of the future career of the new member had been given to those who watched him as he took his seat, how intense would their interest and amazement have been.

"Mr. Lloyd George," wrote a Parliamentary correspondent, as he surveyed the scene from the gallery, "is a young man, pale and stooping, and of a lounging gait, suggestive of a shrunken Mr. Finlay." But, notwithstanding his journalistic keenness of scent for suggestiveness, it never occurred to him to look into the stooping form of the new member for a future successor to Mr. Goschen in the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. "The intellect of Mr. Lloyd George," his opponent at the recent election had sneeringly remarked, "does not confine him within the narrow limit of this small Principality. His ideas are as boundless as the empire itself." Truth is indeed as often secreted in satire as it is in jest. But one questions whether with all his boundlessness of ambition, the new member entertained even the bare idea of being some day the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the central figure of a scene such as that which he then saw around him. But Time has brought another of its amazing paradoxes in his romantic career, in that he now fills that exalted position which Mr. Goschen occupied on the day on which he first walked up the floor of St. Stephens.

When Mr. Lloyd George first embarked upon his Parliamentary candidature, one of the local organs declared that among a large section in the con-

stituency there was a feeling of apprehension that he would find it difficult to combine political with professional pursuits. "There are many," it continued, "who are quite unable to see how Mr. George can be a lawyer in Portmadoc and a legislator in London." But the "many" were all oblivious of the fact that Mr. George had already faced and overcome the difficulty. His original intention was to follow the example set by Mr. S. T. Evans—the present Solicitor-General,—who had been elected a few months previously for Mid-Glamorgan, and who at that time was, like Mr. Lloyd George, a solicitor dependent upon his practice. Mr. Evans had, with his advent to Parliament, relinquished the position of a solicitor, and entered for the higher branch of the Bar. Mr. Lloyd George decided upon a similar course, with the result that his name was duly entered at the Middle Temple.

But he never went beyond the initial step of application, and the name can still be seen on the list of intending students at the Inn. The reason is obvious. He was bent, above all things, upon a political career, but he soon discovered that the House of Commons is as exacting as Mother Nature,—that it will give its guerdon only to toil, and its homage only to the most absolute devotion. He discerned that to succeed in Parliament a man must be prepared to pay the full price of constant attendance and of an undivided allegiance. He discovered in this the explanation of the unmistakeable fact that few barristers catch the spirit of the House.

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The Courts claim their energies, with the result that the House turns aside from gifts from which the bloom has already been taken. Mr. Lloyd George acted on his discovery and immediately relinquished his intention of reading for the Bar. By a happy touch of Providence, he found himself in the fortunate position of being able to devote himself almost exclusively to the pursuit of politics. His younger brother, who was already linked to him in partnership, undertook to bear the whole burden of the office at Portmadoc, in order that he might be absolutely free to attend to his duties at Westminster.

And on the domestic, as on the professional, side of his interests, the same devotion to his interests was forthcoming. Two years previous to his return to Parliament, he had taken to himself a wife in the person of Miss Maggie Owen, of Criccieth, a young Welsh lass who had endeared herself to the whole of the district by her sweetness of disposition and charm of personality. Lineally descended from Owen Glyndwr, one of the greatest figures in Welsh history, she inherits to the full that passionate love of Wales and that patriotic devotion to its welfare which unceasingly surged through Glyndwr's veins.

No man liveth unto himself, and, least of all, he who hath a wife and family to sustain by the sweat of his toil. Whether, therefore, Mr. Lloyd George could realize his purpose of giving himself whole-heartedly to the pursuit of his Parliamentary duties at Westminster depended in the last resort on the decision of his young wife. For one who had spent

the whole of her life on her native heath, familiar with every face in the district as that of a friend, and revelling in the innate love of the Celt for mountain and for sea, it would mean no small sacrifice to leave the old home with all its happy associations for the great city where all those things that have an irresistible charm for the Celt—the solitudes of nature, the majesty of the hills, and the sense of neighbourly hospitality—are absolutely unknown. But great as was the sacrifice involved, it was readily and cheerfully made when Mrs. Lloyd George realised its necessity in the interests of her husband's life-work.

One of the very first things that Mr. Lloyd George set himself to do on his election to Parliament was to post himself up in its procedure, to master all its forms and usages, and to put himself in vital touch with its spirit and traditions. The House of Commons fascinated him from the outset. "The House," he writes, in the first flush of his devotion, "is essentially democratic. It cares neither for rank nor for wealth. It is bored by a millionaire: it listens instantly to a some-time booking clerk. It pays homage to knowledge, to talent, to statesmanship and to genius." A few months later, he delivered a speech which not only strikingly displayed the keenness of his observation and the closeness of his contact with the great bulk of the members, but also unveiled the high and lofty conceptions which he had already formed of the mission and opportunity of a member of Parliament. "Some men,"



MRS. LLOYD GEORGE IN COURT DRESS.



he declared, “ go to Parliament for social distinction, merely to improve their social position. That is of all classes the most despicable. These were men who prefer a duke’s smile to a people’s blessing —men who prefer to have an introduction to the Queen’s drawing room rather than to help to introduce comfort and happiness to thousands of poor homes in England. That class of men I despise. Some men go into the House of Commons to advance their own pecuniary interests. Too many of us lawyers do that. Then there is another class—the company promoters—the men who have the magic letters M.P. added to their names in order to sell it to the highest bidder. These men are called guinea pigs. There is a third class of men who go to Parliament in order to get on in the world. Of course, if that ambition is tempered with something that is good and beneficent, let men be as ambitious as they like. There is a further class—the best class—the men who go to the House with an earnest intention of purpose to use the opportunities they have to do what they can for the highest welfare of the people.” By the unanimous verdict of supporters and opponents, Mr. Lloyd George is justly adjudged to be among the brightest ornaments of this last and highest class.

He had not taken his seat many days before he displayed that independence of spirit which has throughout been one of the great features of his career. The Unionist Government had introduced a Tithes’ Bill to which an “ instruction ” was moved by one of the Liberal members

which sought to bind the House to a general revision and re-adjustment of the Tithes in England and Wales. Mr. Lloyd George refused to go with his party on the question, on the ground that he was pledged to a policy of nationalising the Tithes ; and he therefore objected to the adoption of any steps which would result in frittering away this valuable national endowment.

In the independent stand which he thus made, he was supported by one—and one only—among the Welsh Members. The Welsh Press took him to task for such a display of independence, which was stigmatised as “an error not to be lightly passed over, and certainly not to be repeated.” The young delinquent was told that “in politics it is almost as bad to have too much conscience as to have no conscience at all,” and that in the phraseology of the West men who are afflicted with super-sensitive political consciences are called “Mugwumps,” and he was solemnly warned of the unenviable lot and the ultimate fate of the “Mugwump.” Mr. Lloyd George’s reply to these castigations was as effective as it was emphatic. Unless Members of Parliament, he declared, were given some measure of independence, the constituencies might as well send a regiment of Militia which would move at the command of the Chief Whip to the right wheel. He claimed liberty of judgment as an inalienable right, and he refused “once and for all to make mere party the god of his idolatry.” The writers of the Welsh press instantly discerned that the

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new member for the Carnarvon Boroughs was made of much sterner stuff than the typical Welsh member, and immediately their firing ceased.

For fully two months after his election, Mr. Lloyd George chose to remain a silent member, biding his opportunity. It came at last, on Friday, the thirteenth of June, on an amendment moved by Mr. W. S. Caine, the well-known Temperance reformer, to divert the sum proposed by Lord Salisbury's Government for compensation for the extinction of licenses to purposes of agricultural and technical education. In the course of a speech, delivered with all the natural ease and grace of the born orator, he castigated both Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Chamberlain for their support to proposals for compensation after all their assurances of anxiety for Temperance reform. With that mental agility, so characteristic of him, which enables him to press into service in illustration of his remarks the latest incident or the most current phase of events, he described them as political contortionists who, in common with the American performers who were at that time visiting London, performed the great feat of placing their feet in one direction and their faces in another, leaving the spectator in utter bewilderment as to the intended direction. The speech was an instantaneous success. The occupants of the Press Gallery—connoisseurs in the art of Parliamentary oratory—were completely captivated, and both the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Star* of the following day declared that the speech

was fraught with the promise of a great career. The triumph was repeated a month later at a great demonstration held in Manchester at the Free Trade Hall. The speech, delivered with all the intense fervour of the Celt, and in a voice that rang out like a bell, made the very rafters, which in days gone by had been resonant with the echoes of the historic orations of John Bright, resound afresh with the impassioned strains of an inspired oratory. It swept the audience with so irresistible a sway that they sprang to their feet, waved their hats and handkerchiefs in an unrestrained frenzy, and revelled in scenes of indescribable enthusiasm. In the audience was Henry Irving. The silvery tone and the perfect elocution of the speaker completely captivated his trained ear, and when Mr. Lloyd George at length resumed his seat, the great actor was heard to say, "Magnificent: that young fellow has a career before him."

Immediately his fame as a platform orator spread throughout the land, and in less than three months after his election to Parliament as an unknown youth, he had figured among the principal speakers at great political demonstrations in London, Liverpool, Birmingham, and other large towns. At St. Helens he addressed, in company with Mr. John Morley, a large gathering in support of Irish Home Rule. One may cull from that speech just one passage as a fair sample of his early rhetoric: "When men walk along a dark country lane they imagine they see bogeys everywhere. Every gorse is a goblin, and every man

they meet an assassin. But when the dawn breaks and morning comes, the man regarded as a robber is found to be a friend and perhaps a brother. At one time, the splendid array of Irish patriots were thought to be nothing but assassins and robbers. But the bogeys have been laid, and men regarded as assassins are now found to be comrades."

It goes without saying that a speech, couched in so choice a strain and delivered with a silver-toned eloquence, completely magnetised the audience. Mr. Morley described it as "the very brilliant speech of my young colleague. It does one's heart good," he continued, "to see, to feel, to know, that when we of an older generation are gone there are those ready and capable of taking the lamp of progress in their hand." A magnificent tribute, as worthily merited as it was magnanimously accorded, and Lord Morley must surely rejoice to think that that touch of chivalry has been more than justified by the fact that, even before "the older generation has gone," that young orator has succeeded to a commanding place among our leading statesmen.

But, dazzling as were the triumphs of the popular platform, and highly attractive to a man of his temperament, Mr. Lloyd George was not to be weaned by them from the main purpose of his work. He realized that his appointed sphere was at St. Stephens, and he accordingly turned the main current of his interests and energies in that direction. He linked himself to Mr. Tom Ellis, who had already succeeded in capturing the ear

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and interest of the House in regard to Welsh matters. He availed himself of every opportunity of pressing upon the notice of the House the specific needs and grievances of Wales. He brought forward a resolution condemning the appointment of a monoglot Englishman to a County Court Judgeship in a district where the great bulk of the people were strictly Welsh speaking, and he made so strong a case that the new Judge was shortly afterwards transferred to another circuit to make room for one conversant with the vernacular tongue. He delivered the most powerful speech in support of Mr. Bowen Rowlands' Direct Veto Bill for Wales and, acting as one of the tellers, had the satisfaction of announcing the successful issue of the division on the second reading, even with a Unionist Government in power. The debate on Welsh Disestablishment was galvanised with so much fresh force and intensity that even Mr. Gladstone felt constrained not merely to be present but also to speak in favour of a demand that, as he put it, "the Welsh people had by an overwhelming majority, constitutionally, lawfully, peacefully, regularly and repeatedly made to Parliament."

"This has been a Welsh session," declared the young politician with an undisguised note of triumph as he surveyed its record. The journals of the House for the session which marked Mr. Lloyd George's first year in Parliament show an amount of work in the interests of the Principality that was absolutely unprecedented in the history of Welsh politics. By questioning ministers, by moving

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resolutions, by discussing Bills in committee, by opposing appropriations in Supply, the Parliamentary representatives became for the first time a force at Westminster and not a feeble echo of party shibboleths as in the past. The remarkable change which had taken place in regard to Wales was well expressed by Sir Charles Dilke, who, speaking at the close of the '91 Session, said : " There is no part of Great Britain in which the standard of Parliamentary representation has been so improved as in Wales. There was a time, and that until very recently, when Wales was largely represented by estimable gentlemen but the ideas of whom were of an extremely limited description and who, if they had been asked to state their views as to the measures required for the improvement of the people of the Principality, would have found great difficulty in expressing them, either by speech or in writing. Now there are in Parliament a number of young Welshmen like Mr. Tom Ellis and Mr. Lloyd George, trained in Wales, who are admirable representatives of the modern culture of the Welsh people, and certainly no men are more respected by their colleagues or more advanced for their ability and the business aptitude they display than are these representatives of Wales." For the first time the suggestive phrase " Wales in Parliament " was coined, to appear henceforth as a standing headline in the leading newspapers in the Principality. A new impetus was given to Welsh politics—a larger potency and a wider outlook. A prophet had at length appeared in the land, and the dead bones were already

moving—touched into life, energised into action. "Wales is not only awakening," declared the very journal that only a few months before had bitterly bewailed the woeful neglect of the claims and interests of the Principality through the deplorable delinquency of its inefficient and silent members—"but also succeeding and pursuing its task with the strengthening sense of achievement."

At the close of his first session, Mr. Lloyd George paid his first visit to the coal-field district in South Wales, to speak at a great political demonstration in the Rhondda Valley. "I had pictured to myself," wrote one of the most brilliant of Welsh journalists at the time, "a red-haired, freckled, uncouth young man, with a certain gift of speech—with a voice as shrill as a washerwoman's and as inexhaustible as a cheap-jack's. I was therefore very pleasantly surprised when, instead of the man I had pictured, I beheld a youth of pleasant face and intelligent look, not marked out from the common herd except by a certain gentlemanliness and culture which could be felt but not described. My surprise was accentuated when I heard him. Where was the rough shrill voice that I had expected, the uncouth gestures and the awkward gesticulations? Thus I thought when for the first time I experienced the magic of his silvery voice and beheld his graceful and appropriate gestures, and listened to his words, burning eloquence, relieved by a true vein of Welsh humour. His peroration fairly brought down the house. His sweet voice had

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a warlike ring in it, his quiet presence seemed for the time being to be inspired with the martial spirit of his ancestors, who marched into Saxon-land to do or to die to the tune of Harlech, when with flashing eyes and determined mien he recited Ceiriog's lines :

‘Sword 'gainst sword will play,
Steel 'gainst steel will clash—
Liberty will win the day.’”

But side by side with praise came criticism and advice. “Get up your political philosophy,” was the advice tendered by one of his critics, “a good six months' hard grinding at Maine and Aristotle, Hobbs and Locke and Burke, would do you a world of good. You have great powers both of thinking and of talking, but they require training and cultivation. About you there are great possibilities—possibilities that may end in much or in nothing.” But in place of burning the midnight oil in poring over tomes on which the dust of the ages had accumulated, he turned his attention to living personalities. He contributed to one of the Welsh newspapers published in his constituency a series of Parliamentary sketches which were marked by as keen an insight as they were by vividness of description. Space will only permit a reproduction of just two or three :

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN :

“He is an extraordinary man, who has cleaved his way by sheer strength. He is a strong, forcible, but rather savage personality, and the

secret of his strength seems to be that he knows his own mind. Though his horizon is not very extensive, he sees very clearly what lies within the range of his vision, and he goes straight for his purpose ruthlessly and relentlessly. Not an orator like Mr. Gladstone—never displaying much imagination or given to flights of fancy, he yet possesses the rare power of lucidity of utterance. He is much more aggressive and far more persistent by nature than Mr. Balfour. Balfour is regarded by those who know him as rather easy-going. He has never been a really hard worker. When Secretary for Ireland, he roused himself more than he had ever done in his career before, but even then he received without questioning any explanation sent by the Irish Constabulary in regard to any complaint submitted to him. It was much less troublesome to do that than to investigate into the matter himself. But Chamberlain is quite different. He is full of quicksilver, constantly on the move, and bubbling over with energised vitality."

LORD ROSEBERY :

"He has an extremely youthful face, handsome and full. He is a strange man in many ways. It is admitted on all sides that he is the finest Foreign Secretary that this country has had since the time of Palmerston. He is full of genius. Born under the canopy of purple he has intellect and wealth, but the bane of his life is that he was born a lord at all. It would have been better for him to have been the son of the lowliest peasant on his estate than to have been born a lord.

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There is too much energy and too much fighting spirit in his constitution not to dislike the House of Lords. He is always bemoaning his fate in that he cannot be elected to the House of Commons. But the doors of the popular Chamber have been closed against him more surely than against one of his own men-servants. He heartily dislikes the House of Lords. He has described it as the Chamber of Death where efficient measures are put an end to."

MR. ASQUITH:

"He is a short, sturdy man, with round shoulders, with a face as clean-shaven as that of a latter-day curate: has keen eyes and a broad intellectual forehead. He is only a little over forty, and yet he has already won a high position in the political world. As a Parliamentary speaker, he is excelled by one only. He speaks clearly, with emphasis. He drives his argument home with telling force. One of the proofs of his innate strength is that in spite of every misfortune that has crossed his path—notably the Featherstone disaster—he has attained in the universal opinion of both Parliaments and the country at large to one of the highest positions in regard to influence in the government of the country. It is a hopeful sign that this new captain is a democrat to the back-bone. His early training and the traditions of his youth are closely associated with Nonconformist influences, and in the midst of a council of churchmen and of proselytes this is a matter of no little moment."

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Those who are personally intimate with Mr. Lloyd George will perceive that in these living photographs the flashlight of his observations has revealed some of the dominant features of his own personality.

CHAPTER SIX

LEADER OF "YOUNG WALES"

GREAT as had been the record of his achievements for his first session, the second proved still more fruitful. In the '92 session, Lord Salisbury's Government introduced a Clergy Discipline Bill for the purpose of dealing with clergymen of the Church of England who had proved unfaithful to their vows of ordination, and thus unworthy of their high position as the spiritual guides of the people. Both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. S. T. Evans stoutly opposed the introduction of such a Bill, on the ground that it was no part of the duty of Parliament, which consists of men of divers creeds, to interfere with ecclesiastical matters, and that it was not right for the time and energies of Parliament to be so taken up with purely ecclesiastical matters when there were far more urgent matters affecting the social well-being of the masses which required immediate attention. The Bill, however, was given a second reading by a large majority, and its subsequent progress was referred to a Grand Committee, with Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman in the chair. The two young Welsh members contrived to have themselves elected on this committee, and they immediately set themselves to renew their hostility. This they did with such vigour and fierceness of attack as was absolutely unparalleled in the annals of any Grand Committee. They exhibited an extraordinary mastery of ecclesiastical law and organisa-

tion. So great was the ingenuity with which they framed amendments and so resourceful were they in the tactics they pursued that the passage of the Bill was seriously jeopardised. Its promoters took alarm, and in their panic they rushed to Mr. Gladstone, an intensely zealous Churchman as they knew him to be, to solicit his presence at the Committee, and thus by the tremendous force of his prestige and authority to call off the scent these two young Welsh Members who belonged to his pack. Mr. Gladstone readily acceded to their request and, for the first time in the memory of the members of the House of Commons, attended a meeting of the Grand Committee. But his presence absolutely failed to work the desired and the expected magic. In vain did he reprove and expostulate with these young spirits. They went on with their opposition, undismayed by Mr. Gladstone's frowns and unmoved by his appeals. One meeting lasted for more than seven hours,—a record in the history of Grand Committees. The Grand Old Man, in his eagerness to save the measure, was only able to snatch just a quarter of an hour for his lunch. Mr. Lloyd George declared that he and his colleague were ready to sit every day, Sundays included; the other members observed with undisguised dismay that the two had taken the precaution of equipping themselves with piles of sandwiches which would replenish their energies long after they had worn out the Committee.

The stubborn character of the fight they waged and the full measure of the success which attended

it may be gauged from the fact that the majority against them was ten to one, that Mr. Balfour had to appeal to the House of Commons for almost unprecedented powers to be placed in the hands of the Committee, and that these powers, when granted, although fully exercised, failed so completely that Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, as the Chairman of the Committee, was forced to have recourse to almost a ruthless exercise of his authority. The wide significance of this action on the part of these two young Welsh members may be gauged by the simple fact that never before had the words and actions of the Welsh members received such notice on the part of the English Press.

"It is indeed doubtful," declared one of the London dailies, "if Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton are quite in it with the new practitioners of the malignant art of obstruction. Many of the obstructionist devices of the Healyites have been clumsy and inartistic, and easily frustrated. But these Welsh doctrinaires of the licensed abuse of debate move with so much initial adroitness that when they are upset on a given point—are out-voted on one amendment—they promptly fashion another so like the first as to be only just on the side of 'order.' The celerity with which they argue questions is quite admirable as an example of casuistry. New amendments rise out of old and rejected ones with a freedom that Mr. Healy, with all his knowledge of the 'black art,' cannot even hope to improve upon or to exceed." The English Press—Liberal as well as Conservative—

were aghast with horror over such tactics, but the Welsh Press enthusiastically endorsed their action. "We hail as the dawn of a new and brighter era," declared one of the leading newspapers in the Principality, "this unexpected revolt of the Celt, for if it means anything it means that Wales has at length drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard."

But not even in Wales was Mr. Lloyd George's action allowed to pass by unchallenged, for in no part of the Kingdom was Mr. Gladstone's popularity so great or his authority so commanding as in the Principality. The devotion shown to him was hero-worship in the superlative degree. In proof of this, one may cite the fact that when in 1886 he launched forth his proposals for Irish Home Rule and his followers were left in a minority in both England and Scotland, a Gladstonian majority was elected in Wales larger in proportion than even that returned for Ireland. It was not surprising therefore that a large number of the Welsh people felt not a little aggrieved that the young member for the Carnarvon Boroughs had openly defied the authority of their great hero. But Mr. Lloyd George was ready with his defence. Addressing his constituents, he declared: "I, as a Nonconformist, have dared to differ from Mr. Gladstone on a religious question. Mr. Gladstone is a conscientious Churchman, devoted to the interests of his Church, while I am a Nonconformist lad, likewise devoted to the interests of Nonconformity, and I claim as much right to act according to my conscience as Mr. Gladstone does." It was

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a bold utterance when one recalls the age and authority of the one, who had held high office in the State long years before the youthful member for Carnarvon had been born, but for Nonconformist Wales it sounded the right note, and it was re-echoed throughout the Principality with warm approval. "Hitherto," declared one of the Welsh journals, "the Welsh members have been servile followers of English Liberalism, and a condescending nod from a member of the Front Bench has been sufficient to make them forget the pressing claims of Wales. But at last Wales has, in Mr. Lloyd George, a member who will be no blind follower even of the greatest statesman of the century."

Within less than two years of his advent to Parliament as an unknown stripling, he found himself installed as the acknowledged leader of the Welsh nation, and, north and south, men flocked around his standard with as eager and ardent a devotion as their forbears had rallied for the patriotic campaigns of Llewelyn and Glyndwr. He articulated afresh the national demand for the Disestablishment of the Welsh Church, and that with a zeal and an eloquence that raised the movement to the high level of a crusade. In the course of a few months, he addressed crowded meetings in almost every town in Wales. Everywhere enthusiasm was raised to fever heat, and Churchmen as well as Nonconformists felt that at last the question had become a living issue which could no longer be disregarded. The Church party in Wales had been fortunate in securing as their leader the Bishop of St. Asaph, a man of great resource and possessed

of such fighting qualities that earned for him the sobriquet of "The fighting Bishop." The following paragraph, culled from an issue of the *Cambrian News* of that period, graphically describes the character of the contest waged by the two opposing leaders: "Members of the Welsh Church are delighted with the Bishop of St. Asaph as the champion of their side. His lordship's excursions into the realms of imagination for his facts and the light and airy way in which he treats all Nonconformist aspirations for religious equality marked him out in their estimation as a man of genius. But like begets like. In the nick of time, Mr. Lloyd George has appeared on the scene, and he is as little hampered by precision as the Bishop himself, and goes forward from statement to statement with all the confidence of the Bishop and with little more than his airy lightness. Mr. Lloyd George is not troubled when some ponderous ecclesiastic—the Bishop's Dean for example—refutes in a column of dry prose some inexact speech which has been followed by several others equally in need, from the Dean's point of view, of refutation, modification or correction. Mr. Lloyd George is a great gain to the Nonconformist forces, because he meets the Bishop, who cares little where he strikes, with equally reckless blows."

And so the struggle went on with increasing intensity on both sides. The speeches of the two leaders were as half-battles, the shocks of which were felt throughout the Principality. Whenever the Bishop addressed a meeting in the interests of Church Defence, Mr. Lloyd George followed with

his artillery of raillery. It was on the occasion of one of these meetings that an amusing episode occurred which Mr. Lloyd George delights to relate at his own expense. The chairman of the meeting, a local man who was more adept in weighing sugar than he was at public speaking, commenced the proceedings with the following words : " Ladies and gentlemen—it gives me the greatest pleasure to take the chair at this evening's meeting. The object of this gathering is, as you know, to hear an address from Mr. Lloyd George in reply to the one given in our town only a week back by the Bishop of St. Asaph. I don't know what you think of the Bishop, but I candidly confess to you that I regard him as the biggest bigot in the whole of Wales. But, ladies and gentlemen, (with a thump on the table), we ought to feel proud of the fact that we have in Mr. Lloyd George a match for the Bishop any day, and that on his own ground too." The poor chairman was completely taken aback at the roar of laughter which such a compliment evoked, and at the deep blush which suffused Mr. Lloyd George's countenance.

The battle waxed hotter on the two sides. Intensity of feeling deepened into bitterness. One of the Welsh Deans prohibited the cathedral organist from giving an organ recital at a Methodist chapel, and Mr. Lloyd George publicly satirised the action as arising from the fact that the organ being unconsecrated by hands inspired by Apostolic succession, no organist, daring to touch its unhallowed keyboards, could be permitted to afterwards desecrate the pedals of the Cathedral organ.

So bitter were the animosities of the opposing forces towards each other that one journal felt constrained to call for a truce over Christmas, so that the combatants should have the opportunity of remembering that it was the time of peace and goodwill among men. The climax in the struggle was reached in the summer of 1892 when the General Election was announced, and when, after only two brief years of Parliamentary life, the young member for the Carnarvon Boroughs had to face the ordeal of a contest fiercer than even that of 1890. Just as in '68 Cardiganshire had become the strategic point in the struggle, so the Carnarvon Boroughs became in the contest of '92. All Wales focused its attention on that contest, and great was the anxiety over the issue. The majority on the previous occasion, it will be remembered, had only been eighteen. In the meantime, the young member had been much too outspoken and independent to have won over any of the waverers. On the contrary, it was feared that he had alienated the timorous and the moderate men on his own side. Moreover, his opponents had been shrewd enough to secure as their champion no less a man than Sir John Puleston, who was extremely popular among Welsh people of all creeds and parties by reason of his warm sympathies with the national aspirations of Wales as embodied in the great institution of the National Eisteddfod, and also by his services, along with the late Sir Hugh Owen, to the cause of Higher Education in Wales. But the youthful combatant was in no way dismayed. Like the

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young warrior of Israel, whose name he bears and whose dauntless spirit he inherits, he found inspiration in the memories of past efforts. He had triumphed over the lion and the bear, why should he not equally triumph over a giant? "Time," he declared, in opening his new campaign, "has now somewhat blunted the grave charge of my youth, and I may fairly say that the apprenticeship I have since served has added not inconsiderably to my experience. During the short time I have been in Parliament I have done my best." No man could say more: no constituency could desire a better record. Although the more timid on his side had been scared over the increased pace which he had set in Welsh politics, he had yet been so thorough as happily to have won that full measure of strength and devotion that thoroughness always brings. In regard to this contest, the late Dr. Herber Evans—described by so eminent an authority as Dr. Robertson Nicoll as "unequalled by any preacher of the latter end of the nineteenth century for sheer overwhelming eloquence"—has left it on record that in the throes of the election he left Carnarvon, where he was minister, to attend the annual assembly of the Welsh Congregational Union, of which he was the most potent and distinguished figure. On his way to the assembly he called to see his friend and comrade Dr. John Thomas, of Liverpool, who was laid aside with illness. "When I entered the room where he lay on the sofa," wrote Dr. Herber Evans, "he sat up to welcome me. I shall never forget his look. He looked at me from eternity. He knew that

many were afraid that Lloyd George would lose his seat. Dr. Thomas was a great believer in him ; indeed, he was the first to call attention to Mr. George as a possible member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. With his keen glance, he said to me : ‘ You go back my laddie and put Lloyd George in Parliament. There will be plenty without you at the Union meetings.’ And after a few moment’s pause he added : ‘ There is a new Wales in sight ; you go back home to do your part in helping to bring it in.’ ”

Back to the field of battle went the eloquent divine, and others with him. After a stiff and stubborn struggle, victory came, Mr. Lloyd George being triumphantly returned by a majority of 196 —a majority ten fold greater than that of the previous contest. His triumph evoked immense enthusiasm in the constituency, and was celebrated by a torchlight procession, headed by a great banner on which was inscribed, “ The Victory of Young Wales.”

As the result of the General Election, Mr. Gladstone was returned to power, but in no part of the kingdom was the Liberal majority so large and solid as in the Principality. Mr. Lloyd George was the very first to point out the real significance of this fact. Speaking at a meeting of his constituents at Conway, immediately after the General Election, he proceeded to say : “ Wales has done remarkably well in the last election, returning thirty-one Liberal members out of a total representation of thirty-four, and not only that, but the votes recorded for the Liberal members are

as two to one compared to those cast for the Conservatives. Wales has achieved this in the teeth of unexampled difficulties. Why has it been done? It is very important that Liberal statesmen should understand clearly why Wales is so overwhelmingly Liberal at the present moment. It is not to instal one statesman in power. It is not to deprive one party of power in order to put another in power. It has been done because Wales has by an overwhelming majority demonstrated its determination to secure its own progress. Wales has returned the men most in sympathy with its needs, and with a determination to fight for its rights. The Welsh members wanted nothing for themselves, but they must this time get something for our little country, and I do not think that they will support a Liberal ministry, I do not care how illustrious the Minister may be who leads it, unless it pledges itself to concede to Wales those great measures of reform upon which Wales has set its heart." "Wales," he continued, in a strain and a simile that thrilled not merely his audience, but the whole of the Principality, "has lived long on promises. She has in hand a number of political I.O.U.'s from the leaders of one or other of these great parties in the state. One of these debtors is at the present time in a position to take up the note, and Wales is in a splendid position, by the exigencies of the electoral results, to insist upon prompt payment. The question is, will she permit or even encourage her chief debtor to put her off with an offer to renew the note, or shall she make it clear that this time she is going to insist upon

'prompt cash,' and will absolutely give 'no further credit.' If, instead of this cash payment, the Welsh members accept a fresh I.O.U. or renew the promissory notes, or assent to any arrangements for deferring the payment of a debt long overdue, the country must regard them as unfaithful stewards and deal with them accordingly."

The situation, however, was, from a Welsh standpoint, considerably complicated by the appointment of Mr. Tom Ellis as one of the Government Whips. It is an open secret that Mr. Lloyd George did his utmost to persuade Ellis from accepting the position, on the ground that it would inevitably "muzzle" him and would thus deprive Wales, in the difficult task of enforcing her claims, of the ablest and most influential of her Parliamentary representatives. "It would be ungracious," wrote one of Mr. Lloyd George's associates, "not to congratulate Mr. Tom Ellis upon his promotion, nor can we help feeling proud that Mr. Gladstone has recognised those qualities that his countrymen have discovered and admired for some time; but we must not blind ourselves to the fact that his advancement will be a serious loss to Wales, for it necessarily means the abdication of his position as one of the leaders of 'Young Wales.' Of all official positions, that of Government Whip is the most fatal to independence, as one of his first functions is to combat it in others, and for the future, therefore, the influence of Mr. Tom Ellis on Welsh members will be a restraining one, instead of being, as in the past, a stimulating one."

No one realised so keenly as did Mr. Lloyd George how considerably the situation had been affected by Mr. Ellis' acceptance of the position of Whip. He clearly discerned that the personal factor had changed the whole equation. Attached though he was to Mr. Tom Ellis by the strong ties of personal friendship, he was resolved that the policy of wresting from the Government, even at the point of the bayonet as it were, the satisfaction of the national need for Wales for a measure of religious equality should not be subordinated even to the strong claims of personal friendship. It would, he declared to an interviewer some months after the accession of the new Government to power, be a dereliction of trust on the part of the Welsh members to invite the country to support them in a policy of disloyalty and opposition to the Liberal ministry until there were the most unmistakeable indications that the Ministry intended to disregard the claims of Wales. On the other hand, he felt equally certain that they would be guilty of an act of treachery to the Welsh people if they did not take independent action in the event of such indications being forthcoming. "At present," he added, "it is felt that the most effectual way to help Wales is by silence. It may be that circumstances may occur which will cause us to change our policy, but until such circumstances arise, our policy must be one of waiting."

In the year following the General Election, when the Government had found its groove and was in danger of settling on its lees, Mr. Lloyd George initiated an appeal to Mr. Gladstone from the

Welsh Party to redeem the long standing pledge to deal with the question of Welsh Disestablishment. Mr. Lloyd George advocated the policy of urging the matter upon Mr. Gladstone with unflinching persistence, making quite clear to him, without resorting to words of menace, how serious would be the consequence which might result from a non-compliance with the reasonable demands of the Welsh people, and pointing out to him that no other course but revolt would be left open to the Welsh members consistently with their duties to their constituents and with the pledges given. His views commended themselves to his Parliamentary colleagues, and in the summer of '93, the Welsh members, by an overwhelming majority, formally and deliberately resolved upon a policy of open revolt unless they received assurances that the Disestablishment Bill would be pushed through the Commons and sent to the Lords in the session of 1894. By resolutions equally formal, deliberate and drastic, the centralised political organisations of both North and South Wales endorsed this decision. To pass such resolutions and not to carry them into effect when the time for action duly arrived would obviously be to bring discredit upon the Welsh Party, and to invest with appropriate significance the title of "the White Feather Brigade," which had been contemptuously applied to the Welsh members. In 1894, Mr. Gladstone retired from the leadership of the Party, and Lord Rosebery succeeded to the vacant Premiership. The new Ministry sketched out its programme in a "Queen's Speech," in which the reference to

Welsh Disestablishment was assigned almost the last place in the order of the measures which it was intended to introduce. When questioned on the matter, Sir William Harcourt, as Leader of the House, absolutely declined to specify any definite time for the introduction of the Welsh Bill or to give any pledge in regard to it. With that the long threatened Revolt broke out like a thunder clap. After all the threats and menaces, the strongly worded resolutions and philippics, the number of those who were prepared to translate their heroic words into deeds was found to be only four. They were Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. (now Sir) Francis Edwards, Mr. Herbert Lewis, and Mr. D. A. Thomas, and their action was all the more noteworthy when it is remembered that, with one exception, they held their seats by very narrow and precarious majorities. But courage is always justified of its children, and it proved so in their case.

A revolt of four among the six hundred and seventy members was a matter of small significance at St. Stephens. It had none of the glamour which had invested Lord Randolph Churchill's famous "Fourth Party," and it was realised that it made no appreciable difference even in the slender majority which kept Lord Rosebery's Ministry in power. But in Wales the small band of revolters were acclaimed as heroes, and were enthusiastically compared to the four Hebrew youths who braved the terrors of lions' dens and fiery furnaces in the land of the foreigner rather than be false to their native faith.

It goes without saying that Mr. Lloyd George was the acknowledged leader of this new Fourth Party. Accompanied by his three doughty lieutenants, he went on a crusade throughout the Principality, addressing crowded gatherings in vindication of the Revolt and electrifying his audiences with the strong heroic strains of his speeches. It may well be questioned whether at any subsequent period of his career he has delivered any speeches that could compare in verve and vigour, in directness of appeal and fervour of eloquence to those delivered by him at that time. One of the many striking passages may be quoted as illustrative of the tone and purpose of all his speeches. Addressing his own constituents in April, 1894, immediately after the announcement of the Revolt, he said in the course of his speech : " Just now the character of the Welsh people is at stake. Are we to go to the Government in a humiliating spirit and say that we have transgressed and that we only meant to frighten, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Shakespeare, who, after making a quarrel, cowered when he found his opponent ready to stand his ground ? Have we, as a nation, enough firmness to face difficulties. If not, we are not worth fighting for. The English people, who possess self-reliance and self-respect, were under the impression that the Welsh people are not in earnest and are mere parasites. Let us fearlessly stand our ground and refute the insinuations that we can be passed by unnoticed. Mr. Gladstone on one occasion remarked that we Welsh were too sheep-like. The Welsh have

patience and forbearance. No other nation has exhibited these qualities in a larger measure. But let us show that we have boldness as well to face difficulties. The Welsh people have had nothing but promissory notes at the hands of the Government. It is high time that we have cash down."

The campaign was in every way successful. Mr. Lloyd George's fiery appeals were as the burning brands that Samson affixed to the foxes' tails. They fired the whole land. Conferences and conventions—religious and political—in various parts of the Principality, expressed enthusiastic approval of the Revolt. The vernacular Press of Wales in column after column acclaimed the Revolters, and the various constituencies called upon their Parliamentary representatives to rally around their standard. The Government became alarmed with the news that the whole of Wales was in conflagration, and they took immediate steps to stay its course. Lord Rosebery, in a great speech at Birmingham, went out of his way to give an assurance that the Government would pass a Disestablishment Bill through all its stages in the Commons before they prepared to go to the country. The assurance was readily accepted, and the "Revolt of the Four" brought to a close. The moral of the whole incident was portrayed by Mr. Lloyd George himself. To quote his words: "The fact will always remain that it was subsequent to the date of the Revolt and after its success in Wales had become evident, that the Premier gave a succession of pledges with regard to the future of Welsh

Disestablishment which the combined efforts of the Welsh members had failed to elicit from the Government prior to that protest. This fact establishes a complete vindication of the wisdom and opportuneness of our stand."

In the following year the Bill was introduced by Mr. Asquith, who was then Home Secretary. Mr. Lloyd George spoke on the first reading of the Bill, and delivered on that occasion a speech which bore ample evidences of the most careful and thorough preparation. But though replete with many historical references, it flashed throughout with the brilliancy of the speaker's oratory. There were passages of passionate declaration which came well within the domain of Parliamentary eloquence. The speaker embodied a most graphic description of the wrongs which Wales had suffered at the hands of the Establishment, and a fervid vindication of the claims of the Principality to the full recognition and prestige of a distinct nation. In condemning the financial proposals of the Bill as far too indulgent, and in arguing that the postponement of the act of justice for a generation would intensify rather than modify or cure present causes of trouble, he spoke in tones and terms which brought him into conflict with Mr. Balfour who described the speech as violent and bitter, but the *Manchester Guardian*, in a leading article on the morrow, gauged the situation by its declaration that "Mr. Lloyd George's speech will be a revelation to most Englishmen of the unsuspected depths of passionate animosity entertained by the Welsh masses for the

State establishment of religion. The temper may be bitter, it may even be unjust, but it clearly exists in formidable strength. Like Celtic peoples, the Welsh have long memories, and their indictment goes back for eight centuries or more."

In view of the small and unstable majority on which the Government were so absolutely dependent, the Welsh members, naturally enough, abstained when the Bill reached its committee stage from proposing amendments which, though highly desirable and even necessary from their stand-point, might tend to harass the Government and to jeopardise the passage of the Bill. But the proposal of the Government to appoint a Commission as the authority to administer the temporalities of the Welsh Church was deemed to be so inimical to the best interests of the Welsh nation that it was felt that a determined effort must be made at all costs to amend it. Accordingly, Mr. Lloyd George, acting with the full knowledge and sanction of his Welsh colleagues, moved, as an amendment, that a Council, elected by the Councils of all the Welsh counties, should be constituted in substitution for the Commission proposed to be created by the Bill. At first, Mr. Asquith took up a most uncompromising position, and refused to entertain the proposal. Ultimately, after a strong appeal by both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Herbert Lewis, he undertook to reconsider the matter, promising definitely at the same time to modify the absolute and arbitrary powers given by the Bill to the Commissioners to over-ride the Welsh County Councils. For such action, however, Mr. Lloyd

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George was so severely criticised that he felt it necessary to vindicate his action. "To say," he declared, "that no member has a right to amend a Bill which affects his constituency is to reduce Welsh representation to a farce. I am not in the least oblivious of party discipline, but surely a certain amount of independence is allowed to a member of Parliament; otherwise you may as well send up cast iron automatic machines to perambulate the corridors of the House of Commons, or set up some system of voting by proxies."

As the result of the pressure which was brought to bear upon him, Mr. Asquith consented to accept Mr. Lloyd George's amendment as part of the Bill, but before he had the opportunity of incorporating it, the Government were defeated on the cordite vote in June '95, and as a result went out of office. Thus, for the third time in five years, the young member for the Carnarvon Boroughs was called upon to face the heavy expense and the still heavier strain of a fiercely contested election. On this occasion, his opponents had harked back to Mr. Ellis Nanney at the instigation of the feeling that he was the strongest candidate on their side. The swing of the pendulum was taking place throughout the country, and the Unionists were gaining seat after seat. In the Carnarvon Boroughs, Mr. Ellis Nanney's supporters anticipated a victory with a feeling of confidence that betokened absolute certainty.

In the course of that General Election, no candidate encountered such determined and desperate opposition as did Mr. Lloyd George.

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Had he retained the seat by just one single vote, it would have been no small triumph under the circumstances. But the contents of the ballot boxes revealed that he had retained it not by one vote, but by 194, only two votes below his previous majority in 1892. "The reactionary tide," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd George in returning thanks for the triumph, "which has swept over England has dashed in vain against the rocks of Eryri. We have reason to congratulate ourselves, not only because we have been victorious, but also upon the fact that we are almost the only constituency in the country where a Liberal majority has been maintained unimpaired."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

“HE is a man of overwhelming ambition,” declared a writer in one of the Welsh newspapers at the time of Mr. Lloyd George’s first election. But though that in a sense was true, it is equally true that, when on Budget night in 1890, Mr. Lloyd George took his seat at St. Stephens, and for the first time surveyed the excited scene around him with the Chancellor of the Exchequer as its central figure, neither thought nor desire suggested to him that the day would come when he should be found in that exalted rôle of the Chancellor. His ambition lay in quite another direction. It was to become the titular leader of the Welsh Parliamentary Party to mould the inchoate band of the thirty Parliamentary representatives of the Principality into an efficient Parliamentary force after the fashion of the Irish Party, and to exercise over them and over the House of Commons that full measure of authority and influence as had marked the leadership of Parnell. This had been the dream of his youth, and he had brooded over it amid the solitudes of the Welsh hills, until it took possession of him with all the force and consecration of a mission. Long before he had been returned to Parliament, he had initiated a discussion in reference to the advisability of forming a Welsh Parliamentary Party whose policy should be to give a general adhesion to the Liberal Party, and also, if necessary, to act independently for the promotion of Welsh

interests. He strongly advocated the formation of a distinct Welsh Party, basing his advocacy on the three-fold ground :—

- (a) The old method had proved a failure.
- (b) If Welsh nationality is a fact, then it must follow that Wales cannot be fairly represented but by Welshmen.
- (c) That experience proves that we cannot redress the grievances of Wales except on the lines of a distinct and independent Welsh Party.

The dream of his youth matured into a definite purpose with his return to Parliament. In an interview with a representative of the *Westminster Gazette*, at the time of the Revolt, he was asked : “Do you intend to have an independent Welsh Party ?” “Certainly,” was the reply. “That is our aspiration—a ‘Young Wales’ Party with ‘National’ motives. You will find it an accomplished fact after the next General Election. The idea of Nationality is a vigorous and growing one, and as a compact band, we shall get our wants promptly attended to by the Liberal Party, in addition to being able to squeeze the Tories when in office.” “And your distinctive platform,” queried the journalist. “Disestablishment first and foremost—that question is the battle-ground upon which our very existence as a nation has been challenged. It must therefore be decided first. Then Land Reform must come—a most pressing subject. Finally, Local Veto and Home Rule for Wales. All Liberal measures, as you will perceive, to none of which the party is in the

abstract hostile." He proceeded to realize the ideal by proposing at a meeting of the Welsh members that they should now publicly declare themselves as a separate political organisation, separate from, but not altogether independent of, the English Liberal Party. If, he said, the Welsh members were really a separate organisation, as they professed to be with their specially appointed chairman and official whips and a separate legislative programme framed every session, well and good, and the country should know it. But, if on the other hand, they were not possessed of sufficient moral backbone to take, in case of need, an independent course in the House of Commons, or to place loyalty to Welsh nationality above and before adherence to English Liberalism, still let the country know it and let them give over playing at independence in the privacy of their own Committee room.

The Welsh members, however, were blind to his ideals, and deaf to his appeal. They clung to their toy and refused to set out for the reality of independence. Baulked in his purpose, Mr. Lloyd George turned aside from a coterie to a people. At this time, the two great political organisations in the Principality were the North Wales and the South Wales Liberal Federations, with a Manxman responsible for the direction of the one and a Scotsman for that of the other. The very existence of these two separate organisations emphasised that division of Wales into North and South which had proved so formidable a barrier in the realisation of a united Wales. With the sure instinct of a

patriot who sought after national unity as the fundamental basis of his policy, Mr. Lloyd George conceived the urgent need of eliminating these baneful distinctions, and of thus removing the mortification of seeing one part of Wales lagging behind the other. He therefore strenuously advocated the absorption of the two existing organisations in one single Central Council, representative of the whole of Wales, and capable of expressing the mind of the Welsh nation at large, at any time of crisis, with a full and undivided voice.

While, however, the members of the two Federations were leisurely considering these proposals, Mr. Lloyd George proceeded to rope in the "young bloods" of the nation in the cause of Welsh nationalism. With characteristic quickness of vision, he discerned, in their virgin energies and enthusiasms, rich veins of resources which were only waiting to be developed and turned to account. To that end he created a new organisation, called the "Cymru Fydd" League, the specific objects of which were declared as—

- (a) To conserve the national individuality of Wales.
- (b) To secure legislation for Wales on national lines.
- (c) To promote the return to Parliament of members pledged to support the national policy of the League.

He was quick to see that if a nation's politics be divorced from everything but party cries and electioneering tactics, its best energies will

inevitably become sterilised, and its ideals lost in a policy of more material considerations and of sheer expediency. He therefore set himself to vitalise Welsh politics with high idealisms and to suffuse them with the inspirations that come from a deep sense of a nation's destiny. Just as in the first years of his Parliamentary career, he had set out on a crusade throughout the length and breadth of Wales in opposition to the Established Church, so he now went forth on a pilgrimage through the same towns and hamlets proclaiming with all the fervour of a friar, the new evangel of Welsh Nationalism. "We must be true to our nationality," was his message. "The lesson that Welsh patriotism has to teach is that we cannot be good men unless we are good Welshmen to start with. We may admire England to our heart's content, but let us not mimic it. The first and foremost article in our creed should be fidelity to our own country and our people. There have been men in the past who gladly sacrificed everything they had for Wales. It is only when the whole nation is possessed by the spirit of their high example that we shall make any real progress. We who are young men on the threshold of manhood—in full possession of the faculties and energies with which Providence has endowed us—are entitled to ask whether our time must be frittered away like that of our forefathers in a policy of vain expectation for the good that is coming to our country, whether we should not at once bend our whole vigour and strength to the task of freeing her from all oppressions, so that when the time

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comes for us to be gathered to our fathers, we shall carry into the tomb not a wreath of faded hopes, but trophies of real victories which we have helped to win for the freedom, the honour and the greatness of the little land we all so cherish."

It requires no gift of imagination to picture the thrilling effect of such eloquent words as these among a people who are proverbially susceptible to the charms of inspired oratory. The heart of the nation was stirred as it had been stirred hitherto only by the great princes of its pulpit, the memory of whose eloquence was being cherished by the people as the greatest heritage of the nation.

But the path of the crusader never was an easy one. While the youth of Wales rallied around Mr. Lloyd George as their idolised hero, the older men held back. History is ever repeating itself. In Wales, as in Palestine, Age challenged Youth, and, surveying its own silver locks as the tokens and proof—the hall-mark—of wisdom and achievement, asked in tones aggrieved, if not indeed defiant, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and dost thou teach us?" And so the grey beards not only held back from Mr. Lloyd George's standard of Welsh nationalism, but vigorously opposed his plans for the absorption of their Federations in one central national organisation. The division of opinion deepened into an open conflict between the young men—impatient over the existing order of things, and eager to achieve for Wales political triumphs greater than had ever been secured in the past—and the older men, irreverently dubbed "the old stagers," who were content to live on the

memories of old victories and on the traditions of a great past.

So fierce did the struggle become between the two opposing forces, that the battle ground was extended from the platform to the Press, and the issues fought out afresh. In one of the most influential of the Welsh denominational organs there appeared a series of special articles which created an intense feeling throughout Wales. In these articles Mr. Lloyd George was openly and bitterly assailed. He was likened to the upstart Cleon, the demagogic shoemaker, whose strength was declared to lay in his tongue, and who, by dint of his brawling voice and low panderings to the impulses of the populace, became a power in the counsels of the Athenians. Mr. Lloyd George was charged with having moved his amendment to the ninth clause of the Disestablishment Bill without the authority or cognizance of the Welsh Party, and the writer assured his readers that the Government had resigned rather than face certain defeat at the hands of the Lloyd George coalition of Irish and Tory members. He was therefore pilloried in the columns of the journal as a man who had wrecked his party, and as a result blighted the hopes of his country for a generation.

These articles created a great stir throughout Wales, and, naturally, Mr. Lloyd George's friends and supporters were intensely incensed. He was urged on every hand to repel the charges which they knew could be proved to be absolutely groundless, but his only reply was the emphatic declaration : " I wish it to be understood very distinctly that I

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do not intend to ask anybody's pardon for any action that I have taken. A policy of independence is the policy which I have always recommended for Wales. We must ask what is right for us as a nation, and persist in demanding it without making an apology to anybody. I mean to stand or fall by that policy." Mr. Tom Ellis, however, drew the sword in the cause of his friend. As he was the Chief Whip in Lord Rosebery's Government, he was in a position to know the real cause of the resignation of the Ministry. Speaking, therefore, with that full knowledge and authority, he declared that Mr. Lloyd George's action had in no way affected the resignation of the Government, which had, as a matter of fact, he proceeded to say, been brought about as the result of the cordite vote. Naturally enough, Mr. Lloyd George's supporters hailed such an authoritative as a complete vindication of both his honour and action.

But, gratifying as it was, it did not altogether repair the mischief. Mr. Lloyd George is by temperament the most sensitive of men, and consequently he very keenly felt the pain of the imputations that had been hurled against him. His ardour was chilled, and there were moments when he felt ready to relinquish his political work and go back to the routine work of a lawyer's office. But just at that time when disillusionment was threatening to blight his political aims and ideas, there occurred an event which changed the whole current of his career. In the spring of 1896, the Unionist Government submitted to Parliament an Agri-

cultural Rating Bill. The whole question appealed to Mr. Lloyd George with an irresistible force. It so happened, by what now proved to be the good fortune of circumstance, that at the office at Portmadoc where he served his articles, agricultural rating was one of the staple interests of the firm, and so, in common with the rest of the staff, the young articled clerk was required to master its principles. This he did with such thoroughness that he obtained a complete knowledge of the question in all its intricate bearings. When the Bill was before the House, Mr. Lloyd George delivered a speech which was described by the Parliamentary correspondent of one of the London dailies as "logical in arrangement, complete in argument, earnest in spirit, and literally corruscating with effective points." It was, however, when the Bill reached its committee stage that Mr. Lloyd George showed to incomparable advantage. He spun out amendments to the measure with such marvellous ingenuity and cleverness that he became, in the words of one of the leading newspapers, "the unofficial leader of the Opposition," while the *Westminster Gazette* declared him to be "the most able of the critics of the Bill." He was in his place with as marked a zeal and devotion as even the sponsor of the Bill. He listened to every speech, marked every changing phase of the situation, and directed his manœuvres accordingly. "Everyone marvels," wrote an eye-witness in the Press Gallery, "at the endurance which Mr. Lloyd George shows in keeping up the debate for nearly ten hours at a stretch. Odds are being

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freely laid that he must break down before the last clause of the Bill is reached." Parliamentarians vied with Pressmen in the tributes they paid to his great adroitness and wonderful staying power. "Mr. Lloyd George in committee," wrote the late Mr. J. M. Maclean, M.P., as he surveyed the scene, "reminds me of the very amusing description given by Mr. Stead of the mouse that made his nights a torture to him when he was a first-class misdemeanant in Holloway Gaol. The moment the Speaker has left the Chair, Mr. Lloyd George begins his work, and he keeps on—nibble, nibble, nibbling the whole night long with such a monotonous pertinacity of ingenious criticism as suffices to drive a long suffering Minister into a state of despair. Then if he is ever caught, and this does not often happen, Mr. Lloyd George puts on a look so childlike and bland that no one has the heart to say an unkind word to him."

Brilliant as were the tactics that impeded the course of the Bill, Mr. Balfour was resolved to see it through at all costs. When Clause 4 was reached, Mr. Chaplin was instructed to move that it be added to the Bill without any discussion. As this was at variance with the understanding previously entered upon when certain amendments were left over by mutual consent from Clause 2 to Clause 4, there was naturally a great cry of protest. On the division being called, about forty members, in order to emphasize their protest, absolutely refused to leave their seats. When the chairman gauged the purpose of their action, he peremptorily called upon them to proceed to the

Lobby. Mr. Lloyd George, who sat in the midst of them pale and defiant, replied, "I decline to leave the House under the circumstances." The Chairman sent for the Speaker, the division lobby doors were re-opened and, as the members came trooping back, the Speaker entered. The Chairman reported to him what had taken place, and mentioned five of them as having refused to obey the chair. As the first of the names reported was that of Mr. Lloyd George, the Speaker asked him if he still persisted in his refusal. Amid a silence that was tense with excitement, the reply came curt and direct : " I do, sir. I decline to go, as a protest against the action of the Government." The other four followed his example. They were accordingly named by the Speaker, and their suspension, moved by Mr. Balfour, was carried by 209 votes to 58. The suspension incensed the Opposition into fresh energy. An all-night sitting ensued, with a record of 36 divisions in the course of the one sitting. But though suspended, Mr. Lloyd George had achieved a great personal triumph, and his praise was on everybody's lips. " To the credit of Mr. Lloyd George," declared the *Daily Chronicle*, " must be put the first beginnings of the fight on the Agricultural Rating Bill. He is a man of great ability, ingenuity, force, and readiness of mind, and he has a remarkable eye for weak points in a debate. His keen criticisms have often been caught up later by the Front Opposition Bench and adopted as the main line of attack. This was especially on the Rating Bill, and many of the points over which Liberal speakers

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waxed most eloquently were first suggested by Mr. Lloyd George. Of all the men on the Liberal side, he has made the greatest mark this session." Sir William Harcourt, as the Leader of the Opposition, openly and magnanimously acknowledged that Mr. Lloyd George had given the party a magnificent lead in their opposition to the Bill. Sir William followed up this public compliment with private advice. He urged upon Mr. Lloyd George to prepare himself for the duties and responsibilities of a high place in the next Liberal Government. " You are much too good a man," were his words, " to fritter your powers in playing the part of a mere free-lance. You are destined for much higher things. It is one thing to object to a tune, but it is quite another and a greater thing to have a part in the choice of the tune." Mr. Lloyd George has confessed to the writer that this advice from Sir William Harcourt proved the turning point in his political career. It revealed to him the possibilities of the position, and opened out, as in a vista, the path that marked the direction of his career. Moreover, it lifted him above the petty intrigues and jealousies which were menacing his crusade in Welsh politics, and bruising his inmost spirit.

And so Mr. Lloyd George came within sight of his Rubicon—and he crossed it; or, in the still more expressive phrase which Mr. Gardiner has coined in his brilliant character sketch in the *Daily News*, " the Parnell of Wales became the Chamberlain of England." Some years later, in a review of a session in which Mr.

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Lloyd George had figured with conspicuous ability, the *Times* pointed out that "Mr. Lloyd George's abilities entitle him to a share in the fortunes of the Party which would surely offer him greater scope than the most complete dictatorship of a little band of Welsh members." But it was precisely this "dictatorship of a little band of Welsh members" that both his ambitions and ideals craved after in the early years of his Parliamentary career. What might have happened had his leadership at that time been received with unanimity, is now a matter of mere speculative interest. It may be that, as one writer has so aptly put it, some future historian will declare that Wales blundered in not receiving that monopoly of his genius such as Ireland has always asserted over her most brilliant sons. Wales' loss has undoubtedly been England's gain: the stone which the builders rejected for the cairn of an independent Welsh Party has become the chief corner stone in the spacious temple of British Liberalism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

IT lies altogether outside the scope of this book to touch even the fringe of the merits or demerits of the controversy that ended in the South African War. These are matters for politicians to discuss and for historians to pass judgment upon. But in a biography of Mr. Lloyd George, there must be more than a passing allusion to the event, for it marks an era in his career and a definite chapter in his history. Opinions differ regarding the course which he took—he may have been mistaken—but everyone must agree that he acted honestly and courageously, and from a deep sense of duty.

As has already been noted, the very first speech of his which was recorded in print contained a strong denunciation of war. The explanation is obvious. During those impressionable years of his boyhood, spent as they were among the strongest of Puritan influences, he was taught to hate all war as the greatest of horrors, and he has never lost that inbred hate. "I feel deeply about the war," he exclaimed, when war was declared between the two countries and his friends urged on him the futility of any further opposition, "and I cannot consent to a policy of silence. I should be false to my convictions if I did." "Nothing," wrote one of his associates, "will convince him that good can ever come out of war." And this

innate dread of war was intensified in regard to the South African War by reason of the fact that we were going to war with a small nationality, and, associated as he himself was by the strong ties of blood and of nature with an equally small nationality, he felt it to be his duty and privilege to plead the cause of small nations. "If you look at the pages of history," he declared, "little nations have ever been the chosen vessels of the Tabernacle to convey the best wines of Providence to the lips of mankind." To him there was something sacred in small nationalities—some touch of the divine that made them invulnerable to the shock of brute strength, and invincible when their conquerors had succumbed to the disintegrating influences of Time. "Two thousand years ago," he declared in passionate tones in the House of Commons, "the great empire of Rome came with its battalions and conquered that part of Carnarvonshire in which my constituency is situated. They built walls and fortifications as the tokens of their conquest, and they proscribed the use of the Cymric tongue. The other day I was glancing at the ruins of those walls. Underneath I noted the children at play, and I could hear them speaking, with undiminished force and vigour, the proscribed language of the conquered nation. Close by there was a school where the language of the Roman conquerors was being taught, but taught as a *dead* language."

When, however, the advocacy of the sacredness of small nationalities failed to awaken a sympathetic chord in a predominant people, the young

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orator set himself to marshall other considerations in his opposition to the war. He delivered, both in Parliament and on public platforms, a series of speeches which, in their fierceness of denunciation of war and in their graphic portraiture of its terrible horrors, as well as in the chasteness of their diction and their eloquence of appeal, rank with Bright's great orations. Let one or two quotations suffice. "Is there any period," he asked "in the history of England or any other country when reforms were carried out in the time of war. The history of every country proves the contrary. In the time of the Revolution in France, a cry was raised in favour of going to war with Prussia, England, Austria and Italy. 'No,' said Robespierre, 'the moment you go to war, there will be an end to all reforms.' France refused to listen, and went to war, with the result that the reforms derived from the Revolution were to a great extent lost. And here we are—the greatest civilizing power in the world—engaged in the greatest military struggle we have entered upon. One would surely expect some magnificent service to humanity from the greatest effort ever made by the greatest civilizing power. What is that service? I have searched for it in vain. It might be, as has been said, that, as a result of the war, we should increase the profits of the gold mine owners by three or four millions a year. What of that? It would have been cheaper, as a financial transaction, to have paid them an annuity out of the public funds, and all the blood and bitterness and devastation would have been spared.

In money alone, the war is costing us at the rate of eight millions a month. Every time a lyddite shot is fired, it costs what would pension two men for a whole year. One battle blazed away £50,000 in shot and shell. The money that would have built comfortable homes for hundreds of thousands of our fellow men has gone to dig graves in South Africa. This is the way we are called upon to uphold the prestige of the British Empire: the whole Empire with its teeming millions fighting against two small States with a population no bigger than that of two of the smallest Welsh counties."

Speaking at Oxford, he delivered a speech in reply to one given by Lord Rosebery a few days previously and reported in the newspapers. The exigencies of space will only permit one brief quotation, but it is worthy of note that that speech takes rank as probably the most eloquent and trenchant speech that even he has delivered. "Lord Rosebery," he said, "has summed up our losses in this war, but the greatest loss of all was not comprised in his enumeration. It is true that at the end of this war we shall miss millions from our coffers. We shall miss many a gallant name from the roll call of our warriors. But there is something infinitely more precious to every true lover of Britain that we shall miss, and that is the distinction of being the hope and shield of the weak and oppressed in all lands, which was once the brightest gem in Britain's glory. No Liberal at least would have bartered that for all the gold in the Rand. Lord Rosebery would set himself to

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restore the damage done to our prestige. But what are the materials he would use for the purpose? He has supplied us with a list of them, and he has waxed eloquent over the mere category. What are they? We have, he tells us, transport arrangements that no country in the world can emulate. We have an incomparable navy. We have more capital than any other nation can command. But these sentiments of Lord Rosebery have not even the merit of originality. I recollect that the great poet of the new Imperialism uttered the same ideas in those immortal lines :

‘We’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men,
We’ve got the money too.’

But let us not forget that we do not convert music hall rant into high-class statesmanship by the simple process of substituting the word ‘capital’ for ‘money,’ and ‘transport’ for ‘ships.’ In Lord Rosebery’s schedule of materials for the restoration of the impaired temple of Britain’s prestige, he has omitted the most important item of all, and that is, ‘the righteousness that exalteth a nation.’ Lord Rosebery would sharpen England’s sword in order to make it more deadly. Let him rather purge the Empire’s conscience so as to make its statesmanship more upright. He will find that pay even as a military resource.”

In the midst of the acrimony of debate and the division of parties over the war, the Government decided, in 1900, on an appeal to the constituencies, and members hied back to the hustings. It was no secret that Mr. Lloyd George’s seat, held only by the slender

thread of a precarious majority, was in the greatest jeopardy. Some of his best supporters had become estranged on account of his attitude to the war, and representations had been sent direct to him from the constituency that "the time for criticism was past; with the declaration of war, it was the time for patriotism." And, most ominous of all, only a few months before he had met with physical violence in the constituent borough of Bangor, so tense and exasperated had the feeling of some of his own constituents become. With such unfavourable omens, and with the khaki fever still raging in the constituency, the outlook was far from hopeful.

A deep sense of uneasiness prevailed even among his most ardent supporters. Mr. Lloyd George alone remained untouched with the contagion. He seemed animated with as dauntless a spirit as nerved Luther to face the Diet at Worms, and his confidence proved a triumph. After a fierce contest, second to none other in the land in the bitterness with which it had been fought, the ballot boxes gave Mr. Lloyd George a majority of 296, an increase of over a hundred on his previous biggest majority. Such a triumph, as can well be imagined, evoked the wildest enthusiasm, and one can give the reader no better description of the memorable scenes which followed than by reproducing the vivid pen picture of Mr. Harold Spender, who was a keen and interested eye-witness: "Never do I remember such a scene of ecstasy. It was close upon midnight when the Mayor stepped out on the balcony of the Town Hall to announce the result. 'Lloyd George,' he

cried, but he could say no more. One mighty shout arose from the multitude beneath. No future word could be heard. Then came delirium. The people closed in upon their hero. They wrung his hand until it almost came off. They patted his back until it almost broke. They drowned his protests in their shouts. Manfully the escorting force of constables fought their way forward, but from above Mr. Lloyd George's white hat looked like a little paper boat in a raging sea. And so they brought him to the door of the club—a helpless hero, a conqueror almost slain by his own conquest. And then Mr. Lloyd George spoke a few of those brief pregnant sentences which he knows so well how to coin. 'While England and Scotland are drunk with blood, the brain of Wales remains clear, and she advances with steady step on the road to progress and liberty.' A mighty shout rose up such as rose when in 1895 he cried from the same window that the wave of reaction had broken on the rocks of Snowdonia. Descending from the balcony, Mr. Lloyd George, accompanied by his leading lieutenants, entered a brake. The crowd, with one consent, formed up behind in marching column, and as they marched they sang :

"Hurrah ! Hurrah ! We're ready for the fray,
Hurrah ! Hurrah ! We'll drive them all away ;
The grand young man will triumph, Lloyd
George will win the day.

Fight for the freedom of Cambria."

Looking at that multitude singing, as only Welshmen can sing, you saw its tread becoming perfectly

rythmic : its confusion become order : delirium pass under the magic of song : the mob become an army. And so they marched through the whole town, while every window and housetop was filled with waving hats and handkerchiefs. It was like the welcome of a king returning from the wars. Seized by a sudden inspiration, Mr. Lloyd George stood upright in the carriage, and so, with lifted hat, met the multitudes face to face with a happy smile. A few months ago they had stoned him : a few weeks ago they were still against him, but now, with silver tongue, he had won back their hearts, and his people were with him again. Surely few men have ever tasted such an hour. The procession reached the end of its journey. Then Mr. Lloyd George called for silence and asked them to sing once more the Welsh National Anthem, "The Land of my Fathers." In a moment there was utter stillness, and then they sang that great and solemn anthem. The darkness above us lent the scene a ghostly majesty. The earnest melancholy harmonies breathed an undying hope : the sea of invincible faces gave a sense of vast indefinable strength. The great hymn ended, and then in a perfect quietness the great multitude dispersed. And so was a victory for courage which, in this election, will hold an historic place second to no other."

Armed with the approval of his constituents over his attitude to the war, Mr. Lloyd George re-entered the Parliamentary arena with quickened zeal and ardour. "Always go for the big game," was Lord Randolph Churchill's remark,

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when, some years back, he had boldly singled out the Grand Old Man for the target of his attacks. Mr. Lloyd George recalled the advice, and admired the policy. "There is too much of the pillow-fight in present-day politics," he had complained.

He was bent on putting precept into practice, and, marking Mr. Chamberlain as the strong man of the Government, and directly responsible for the policy that had led to the war, he directed the whole of his artillery upon him. No one knew better than did he how rash and dangerous a thing it was to attack Mr. Chamberlain, for, as he once remarked to the writer, he had seen members try it, "but with always the same result. Chamberlain has gone for them as a terrier goes for a rat." For him, however, the prospect held no terror. He was always a fighter, so it was "just one fight more."

The desired opportunity soon came. Mr. Chamberlain had been attacked by one speaker after another on the Liberal benches, and his policy bitterly assailed. Presently Mr. Chamberlain arose—with a gleam in his eye half triumphant and half defiant. He met the attacks with all the calm confidence of the victor, and he made such a pitiable exhibition of his assailants that the Opposition were thrown back in a state of impotent rage. Mr. Chamberlain had no sooner sat down, amid the ringing cheers of his supporters, than up sprang a young member from a corner seat below the gangway. He returned the fusilade of fire upon Mr. Chamberlain himself, and that with so unerring an aim that one could mark the ensuing

havoc. In other words, he employed the Chamberlain methods against Mr. Chamberlain himself : the same clear low-pitched cruel voice : the same keen incisive phrases : the same caustic sneer : the same sardonic humour and the same deep note of personal enmity, and all this with such a striking similarity of tone and of manner as to make the House start involuntary. The speech did what no other speech had been able to do. It made Mr. Chamberlain, hitherto immobile of face and impervious to attacks, visibly wince. He sprang to his feet, pale with anger, and in a voice quivering with suppressed pain, he appealed to the House to allow him to make a second speech. From both sides of the House, members hastened out into the Lobby to discuss Lloyd George as the man who had proved himself "a match for Chamberlain." But he was not satisfied with a personal triumph over the opposing commander. He believed in Scipio's policy of carrying the war into the enemy's camp, and of routing the opposing battalions at their very centre.

During the controversy over the South African War, opponents of the war had held aloof from Birmingham. It was the proscribed area—the zone where the enemy's fire was hottest. To Birmingham, therefore, the young champion from Carnarvon decided to go, and a public meeting was therefore arranged, with Mr. Lloyd George as the principal speaker. "I was warned"—to quote his own words—"that gangs were being organised for physical violence." But the warning failed to move him. The greater the

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danger, the greater becomes his resolve. The denizens of Birmingham rightly saw in Mr. Lloyd George the most formidable opponent that Mr. Chamberlain had, and, naturally enough, they resented the attacks made upon their most popular and distinguished citizen.

On the night of the meeting, a crowd of over 30,000 people assembled in the vicinity of the Town Hall. The noise and din was so terrific that it was impossible to hear a word uttered from the platform even at the reporter's table beneath. For a full hour Mr. Lloyd George remained standing, and essaying to direct his remarks to the reporters, but all to no purpose. Every sound was lost in the frenzied howling of the mob. The crisis came when a huge stone crashed through one of the windows. Then came a sudden and fierce rush for the platform, followed by a terrible tussle between the mob and the police. Outside the hall men were battering in the doors and rushing the entrances, heedless of the blows that came from police truncheons. The Chief Constable, who had police experience in Ireland during the most turbulent times of crime and coercion, expressed that never before had he seen so frenzied and riotous a mob as had stormed the hall that night. Thirty-seven people were so seriously injured that they had to be removed to the hospital, while one lost his life in the terrible mêlée. Mr. Lloyd George was surreptitiously hustled into the secrecy of a little room at the back of the platform. The Chief Constable, distracted by thoughts as to how it was possible to save the

young M.P. from the certainty of physical violence and smuggle him out into a place of safety, recalled, as by a touch of inspiration, that the American police had rescued President McKinley's assassin from being lynched by an infuriated populace by resorting to the ingenious trick of "rigging" him up in a policeman's uniform. The plan appealed to the Chief Constable in his extremity, and Mr. Lloyd George had no course other than to submit, for what will a man not give for his life? He accordingly formed up with the police in the secrecy of that room, and had a rehearsal until he got into the step and the bearing of a true "Robert." Then he marched out with his temporary comrades of the force, arrayed like themselves in a buttoned suit of blue, but he nearly courted disaster for his overcoat bore the number 40D while his tunic was marked 87D. A lynx-eyed sergeant discovered the disparity, and it was only when the circumstances were confidentially whispered in his ear that his suspicions of a usurper were allayed. But even then, by some perversity of fortune, someone recognised him as he emerged under the searching glare of an electric arc. "It's the middle man," exclaimed the knowing one, but, fortunately, the crowd was too much excited to pay any attention to any improvised exclamations. Mr. Lloyd George still relates with an undiminished relish how during the mile and a half's walk to the home of his host, he and his companions were tauntingly referred to as "bloomin' coppers." When the memory of the incident had ceased to rankle,

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it was left to Mr. G. R. Sims to give it a humorous turn. "It is all very well for Mr. Lloyd George," he said, "to attack Mr. Chamberlain about Protection, but he should remember that Mr. Chamberlain comes from Birmingham, and when Mr. Lloyd George was there *he* wanted Protection—and, luckily for him, he got it."

CHAPTER NINE

THE EDUCATIONAL REVOLT IN WALES

THE House of Commons has been well defined as a poor place for a true orator. It brings out the orator's weakness rather than his strength. Its light is the steady unchanging cold electric light—not the warm glow of fire that crackles and burns. Cold casuistry is its cult, and everything that approaches the emotional is tabooed.

Mr. Lloyd George entered the House with a reputation as a great platform orator who could move audiences as a summer's breeze sways the growing corn. At first, the House looked askance at him as a demagogue, but gradually it began to succumb to the magic sway of his speech. The passion of the man began to exercise a sort of fascination for the most critical and most cynical assembly in the land. Whenever the keyboards of the smoking room signalled that Lloyd George was "up," the members hastily put aside their cigars or knocked the ashes out of their pipes and trooped back into the House in eager anticipation of a speech flashing with brilliant wit and mordant humour. His seat in those days was the corner seat of the second bench below the gangway. In front of him sat Mr. Labouchere, behind him Mr. Tim Healy, and in the backmost corner, Mr. John Redmond. It was a single file of the most brilliant debaters, and the House soon learnt to look to that quarter for the most deadly line of fire. Though the youngest in point of age Mr. Lloyd George

became the leading figure in the file. His humour was more genial than that of Mr. Labouchere, while even an Irish journalist was forced to confess that Mr. Lloyd George's invective wounds even more than does Mr. Healy's, while his style glows and throws into shade the measured monody of Mr. John Redmond's eloquence. Sitting in his corner seat, he would rest his manuscript on the arms of the seat, making copious notes, but all the while his whole body would move with a restless energy, and his eyes would flash with an eager gleam that marked the mental alertness of the man. His very manner of rising was described as startlingly like that of Mr. Chamberlain—"the sudden leap to his feet, the momentary pause to shake out his coat tails and stretch his shirt cuffs." There are many conventional Parliamentary phrases which enable a speaker to pass from one argument to another. The House soon learnt that Mr. Lloyd George's characteristic phrase was, "I say, with confidence, Mr. Speaker," his pronunciation of the word "confidence" being deliberate, with almost a perceptible pause at each syllable. The word was characteristic of the man. It marked the password to his own career.

Great and striking as had been his triumphs already on the floor of the House of Commons, the greatest were yet to come. They came with the introduction of Mr. Balfour's Education Bill in 1902. The occasion found Mr. Lloyd George prepared, and with characteristic readiness he grasped his opportunity. He was thoroughly familiar with the issues involved, for, some years

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back, when the fortunes of the ballot had fallen to his lot, he submitted for debate a motion that, in the opinion of the House, "it is essential to a just and efficient system of national education, that there should be within reach of every child a public elementary school under local representative management." On that occasion he delivered a speech so masterly in its grip of the issue, so picturesque in its metaphors, and so telling in its effect upon the House, that Sir William Harcourt, immediately on its conclusion, scribbled on the back of an envelope : "Magnificent ! You have delivered a speech of which Grattan himself would have been proud." When at last the skirmish culminated in a battle royal between the contending parties, no one entered into the fray more thoroughly equipped than was he. He championed the cause of the Nonconformists in the 8,000 rural parishes where only denominational schools existed, and where the door to the scholastic profession was closed against them, and that with so intensely earnest an advocacy and so vivid a description of the harshness of the grievance, coloured by his own personal experience and knowledge, that the House was profoundly moved. Brilliant speeches in debate were followed by constant attendance and unceasing vigilance in committee, where he framed amendment after amendment in skilful fashion in his efforts to safeguard the interests of Nonconformity. "Until Mr. Lloyd George spoke," wrote Mr. Massingham, "Nonconformity, its intellectual attitude to education, its historical associations with the settlement of

AN IMPASSE.



SIR WM. ANSON : " If you don't go away and let me pass, I shall really have to use strong measures—in fact, I shall be obliged to coerce you."

By courtesy of the "Westminster Gazette"



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1870, now being torn up, and its contribution to the religious problem, has gone without a recorder and a champion. Mr. Lloyd George has now taken the vacant place. Here is an authentic voice, worthy in its way of the traditions associated with the great names of Bright and Spurgeon. A comparison with Bright's method and style—of course with real differences—often rose to my mind as I listened to Mr. Lloyd George; for here was Bright's simplicity of thought, directness of expression, and vivid, instinctive fighting quality. The fighting part of the speech was indeed splendid.” “Mr. Lloyd George's part in the debates,” declared Mr. Balfour with a chivalrous touch worthy of the best traditions of our public life, “has been most distinguished, and though I could wish unsaid some of his observations, yet we must all admit on both sides of the House and in the country that he has made himself a position as an eminent Parliamentarian.” This tribute, hailed with loud and general cheers in the Commons, was re-echoed in the House of Lords, where Lord Rosebery, in the course of a speech on the Education Bill, proceeded to say: “Frequent allusions have been made to the fight which has been carried on in the House of Commons for the last seven months against the Bill. That fight has been carried on in the main by Nonconformists, of whom the great protagonist has been Mr. Lloyd George, who has fought this Bill with a readiness of resource to which speakers on both sides of the House have done justice.”

But into the ointment came the inevitable fly.

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The hero of the controversy was referred to in one London organ as "the family solicitor to the Nonconformist Conscience who has to feel at home in Little Bethel while knowing the ropes amid the tents of Shem"; while the *Saturday Review* described him as a "bigoted, narrow-minded Puritan, a sort of Cromwellian Ironside who flits about a world for which he is two centuries too old."

The taunt, however, evoked a spirited protest on the part of a devoted follower, who declared: "Mr. Lloyd George reads the *Church Times* every week and enjoys it. I myself have quoted to some of his political opponents extracts from his speeches on ancient British Christianity, and they have confessed their surprise that so narrow-minded a man as they imagined him to be could entertain such philosophic views."

All the land over he was hailed as the champion of Nonconformist interests—the Joshua of Dissent—and vast numbers in the Free Churches of England who had resented his action over the war, eagerly rallied round his standard and enthusiastically hailed him as their leader. When the Bill was passed through Parliament and given the force and sanction of the law, Mr. Lloyd George declared that, as the Act had passed out of the hands of Parliament, the fighting must be conducted by the people themselves. In England, as the reader will remember, the Nonconformists decided to embody their opposition to the Bill in a policy of "Passive Resistance"—a refusal to pay the rates levied in aid of the denominational

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schools. But Passive Resistance did not appeal to Mr. Lloyd George. He declared it to be heroic in the abstract, but it offered little opportunity for fighting. His quick and resourceful mind discovered in the Act itself loop-holes which made splendid facilities for carrying on the fight. He advised the County Councils of Wales, over whom he exercised an absolute sway, to stand firm in their opposition to the requirements of the Act, for, said he, the real power, represented by the almighty dollar, was entirely in their hands. Before declaring war, however, on the denominational schools, Mr. Lloyd George held out the olive branch in a proposal for a concordat between the opposing forces. "I honour," he declared, "the conscientious convictions of every man, especially in religious matters. I would not touch the conscience of any man. It is putting an unholy hand on the Ark. But we cannot wreck the instruction of the children upon whom the destinies of our country depend in order to protect denominationalism. Our aim is to secure a united national system of education in Wales. We want to unite North and South, the State Church and the Free Church, Liberals and Tories. We want the whole of Welsh thought and energy concentrated upon great educational problems."

To this end he invited the four Welsh Bishops to confer with him and with representatives of the Welsh Councils to see if it could not be possible for both parties to agree to an honourable peace without sacrificing vital principles on either side. Three of the Bishops declined his overtures.

The fourth—no other than the Bishop of St. Asaph—the erstwhile antagonist who had broken so many lances in the past with the Welsh leader,—accepted the invitation, and on the golf links, in friendly converse, with Mr. Lloyd George attired in a short jacket of clerical garb, which did duty as a golfing suit, the two men discussed the ways and means for an acceptable end to the controversy. A settlement was agreed upon, the adumbration of which it is worthy of note is to be found in the Bill which the Bishop of St. Asaph introduced in the House of Lords a short time ago. The settlement, however, was rejected by the extremists on both sides, and the truce ended in a fresh declaration of war. With the failure of the negotiations for peace, Mr. Lloyd George conceived and executed as brilliant and daring a piece of strategy as would have ensured renown for any general on the battlefield, fighting against overwhelming foes. He marshalled the Welsh County Councils into one compact force and ranged their battalions in battle array with a definite plan of campaign. This plan, uniform for the whole of Wales, was to refuse to take over any of the denominational schools unless certified by a qualified surveyor to be in a proper state of repair, and it was estimated that a sum of £200,000 would be required by the managers of the schools to meet the necessary requirement. The Councils, as the Educational Authorities, were then to allocate the amount of the Parliamentary grants between all schools fairly and evenly, but rigorously to refrain from giving a single penny piece out of the rates in support of the denominational schools.



ROBBIE (Mr. Lloyd George) : " If yer don't 'and over the bloomin' swag at once, am without no trouble, I shall 'old yer responsible for all the devastation an' damage as 'll take place."

By courtesy of the "Western Mail."



The Welsh Councils were further to consent to no terms with the managers of aided schools that would include the appointment of teachers whose salaries the Councils were called upon to pay, nor any proposals which would involve the importation of any sectarian or theological tests in the selection of members of the school staff, or in any way to confer any privileges upon clergy of one denomination to the exclusion of other denominations. The plan of campaign was christened the "Lloyd George Policy," and the deft phrase "No control, no cash," coined by the creator of the policy, became its password. Mr. Gladstone once described Welshmen as submissive sheep in regard to their political rights. Mr. Lloyd George's policy was designed to mark the substitution for that meek creature something more of the nature of the Red Dragon, whose fiery breath and red claw represented in past ages the Cymric power of defiance and defence.

Mr. Lloyd George confessed that his policy was to use the Education Act in a manner little dreamt of by its framers. When the authorities at White-hall realized what was taking place in Wales, they became alarmed, and in their panic they rushed to Parliament for fresh legislation to deal with the new developments in the situation. The result was seen in the passing of the Defaulting Authorities Act, which empowered the officials at the Board of Education to deal with rigour with all such bodies or authorities that refused to administer the Act to the very letter. But with characteristic resourcefulness, Mr. Lloyd George out-maneuvred

Whitehall, basing his strategy, as he put it, on the old evangelical maxim : " If anyone would take thy cloak, give him thy coat also ; and if anyone will compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain." If the Government, he declared, were rash enough to stop the grants to the Welsh schools, and the Welsh Councils were thus deprived of the means of administering the Act, they would paralyse the Education Department by throwing upon it the entire direct responsibility for the management and maintenance of every public elementary school in Wales. " They had neither the men nor the means to do that," continued Mr. Lloyd George in a tone in which confidence mingled with defiance. " Their new Act makes no provision for such a state of things. They have no power to appoint managers, to create new educational committees or to levy rates. They assumed that we should consent to go on working while a London department played ducks and drakes with our money. But that is not good enough for Wales. If they take over our accounts, they must take over our schools also. We mean ' to go twain ' with them. If they take away our cloak, we will render them the coat as well. The first attempt that is made to enforce the Act against any Council Council will be the signal for an immediate suspension of the administration of the Act all along the line. If they mandamus any of the Councillors, they will go to prison rather than administer the Act, and Holloway Gaol will not be large enough to contain them. The Educational Committees will resign : the school managers will

give three months' notice to all the teachers and then they will resign. But the welfare of the children shall not be made to suffer under the stress of the struggle. We shall open every Nonconformist Church as a public elementary school. And the education that we shall give them, though not up to the present standard in some departments, will yet be an education that will be invaluable to the whole rising generation in the principles of liberty, justice and nationality. It will be the making of Young Wales. As for the funds, we shall raise the money with the aid of the English Nonconformists, who recognise that it may be good policy for them to make the Principality the arena where the fight will be fought to a finish."

What the finish would have been it is impossible to say. The two opposing forces of Parliament and a people never came to close grips in deadly combat. While each side was marking out its vantage ground, and was content in the meantime to carry on a guerilla warfare, the Government resigned. In this instance, there came to the throne a Pharaoh that knew Joseph, and consequently the tension was brought to a close. Many critics suggested that the resignation came at an opportune time, and that Mr. Lloyd George's usual good fortune intervened. But however that may be, Mr. Lloyd George accomplished in his campaign an infinitely greater feat than any triumph over the Educational Authorities at Whitehall would have been. He brought about the unification of Wales. Not since the 13th

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century had Wales met in National Council until the day that Mr. Lloyd George convened a meeting of the Welsh Councils at Llandrindod Wells, and never before had the thirteen counties of the Principality marched together to the same step or followed the standard of the same leader.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LAURELS OF OFFICE

THERE was a general consensus of opinion, amounting to an absolute certainty, among all parties and politicians, that when the Liberal Party succeeded to power, its leaders would, in the words of Mr. Louis Harcourt, immediately liquidate their heavy obligation to him for his many brilliant services by appointing him to a position of high honour and responsibility. Speculation hinged on the allocation of the particular portfolio. That it would carry a seat in the Cabinet went without saying. Welshmen hoped that the national desire for the creation of a Secretaryship for Wales analogous to that for Scotland and for Ireland respectively, would be realized, and that the "Member for Wales" would become the first Minister for Wales. The prevalent belief was that he would receive a post with slight departmental duties, so that his highly assessable value as one of the leading debaters in the House should be readily available for the service of the Government and of the Party. Great therefore was the surprise—and openly expressed—when he was placed at the head of the Board of Trade, pre-eminently the Department where the commercial instincts of this country find their armoury and where practical qualities and hard business methods constitute the chief essential.

It is not surprising that there were many head-shakings over so daring an experiment

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as that of putting at the head of the great commercial department a man who had only distinguished himself as a dashing guerilla fighter below the gangway, and whose equipment was believed to be a purely rhetorical one. When John Bright first took office in a Liberal Ministry, *Punch* asked in pointed phrase: "Will the sentimental orator be lost in the practical statesman, or will both be extinguished?" A similar question was heard on every hand in reference to Mr. Lloyd George's appointment to the Board of Trade. Everybody acknowledged him to be an orator of the first order: what men doubted was whether he had the necessary genius for detail so absolutely essential for a successful administrator. All that his friends could say—and confidently did they say it—was that all through his career he had never been known to fail: that it mattered not how and when the crucial test came he had always risen to the occasion, and had developed an unexpected reserve of force and faculty.

It was not long before the justification of their confidence was forthcoming. He applied himself to his new task with a devotion that knew no subordination to any other call or interest. He laid aside all the old hankering after the triumphs of public speech, and the House of Commons became startled with the phenomenon of a silent Lloyd George. He worked at his desk day after day for twelve hours at a stretch. It was hard work, he confessed, in a speech to his constituents, and he often wished

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that the principle of an eight hours' day could be applied to the work of Cabinet Ministers. One of his colleagues in the Ministry has been heard to say that Mr. Lloyd George's first question when he found himself installed at the Board of Trade was : " What can I do for commerce—the source of our national sustenance and the crown of our glory among the nations ? " Following immediately on that question came another : " What can I do for labour ? " The questions were characteristic of the man and his mission, and the net results of the two historic years of his tenure of the position abundantly prove how thoroughly he realized such high ideals.

His tenure of the post marks a record in the legislative output of the Department, and in the official list of the legislative and administrative work of the Government, issued towards the close of the year 1907, the most copious account was that which recorded the work of the Board of Trade under Mr. Lloyd George's regime.

His *Merchant Shipping Act* was received with general approval.

His *Patents and Designs Act* marked a legislative triumph of still greater scope and importance. Not only has it consolidated the whole of the Statute Law, but it has removed the disgraceful anomaly which enabled a patentee to patent his invention in the United Kingdom, while placing him under no obligation to manufacture the patented article here. It has been objected that in passing this Act Mr. Lloyd George has shown himself to be a Protectionist, but there is no

ground for this suggestion. Nothing can be more opposed to Free Trade than a statutory monopoly which enables a trader to prevent the manufacture of a commodity in the United Kingdom. No species of Protection could be more intolerable. A monopoly must in justice be subject to the correlative obligation to manufacture in this country.

The *Port of London Bill*, which Mr. Lloyd George introduced while at the Board of Trade, bears the same hall-mark of legislative genius. Until he took the matter in hand, the reorganisation of the Port of London Bill has seemed too gigantic a task and too thorny a problem to deal with. Government after Government avoided it, so full did it seem of conflicting elements and so impossible did it seem to reconcile the public and the private interests concerned. But under the touch of Mr. Lloyd George's wand the ramifications fell as easily as did the walls of Jericho.

Mr. Lloyd George was also responsible for other important measures, and his legislative achievements were equalled by the less exciting but none the less important realm of successful administration of a great Department.

Sir William Lyne, the Commonwealth Minister of Trade and Customs, in reviewing, on his return to Melbourne, his impressions of the Imperial Conference, made the pregnant statement, "If I had to pick the most practical constructive statesman out of the British Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George would be that man." So full-hearted a tribute of the



MR. LLOYD GEORGE WHEN PRESIDENT OF
THE BOARD OF TRADE.

By courtesy of the "South Wales Daily News."



statesman across the seas is but the echo of the oft-expressed feeling among all classes in the Mother Country.

But the great memory of Mr. Lloyd George's brilliant tenure at the Board of Trade is his settlement of the railway crisis. For some years the storm cloud had been gathering on the horizon, and both masters and men marked its coming with forebodings of dread and disaster. Everybody realized how grave were the issues, Mr. Lloyd George intervened at the crucial moment by convening a round table conference to discuss the matters in dispute. The successful issue of his efforts is now a matter of history, and the popular feeling was well expressed in the *British Weekly* in its declaration : " We do not believe there is another politician in the country who could have performed such a feat."

When, as the result of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's resignation, Mr. Asquith became Premier, and a vacancy was thus created in the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George became first favourite for the position. No promotion, it was felt, had been so richly earned, and none was so unanimously approved " No better man could have been found for the post," declared the *Times*, " however free Mr. Asquith might have been in his choice." " Mr. Lloyd George's career," chimed in the *Daily Mail*, " is the best and fullest justification of this selection. He has proved in office that he possesses in exceptional measure that practical business capacity, self-restraint, initiative, and large open

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mindedness which, allied with the faculty of conciliation, are required of one who will control the national finances." In commenting on the striking unanimity which had greeted Mr. Lloyd George's promotion, the *Spectator* remarked : "The *Times* and the *Daily News* are for once in agreement."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MAN AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS

"Whatever Mr. Lloyd George's achievements up to the present may be," wrote a well-known phrenologist some years back in a delineation of the distinctive characteristics of the member for the Carnarvon Boroughs, "they give but an inadequate idea of the extent of his capabilities. Recognised political leaders will have to look to their laurels if they would hold their own beside a mind so colossal in its power and far-reaching in scope and breadth of intellect. The width of his head above and behind the ears gives him great energy, executiveness of purpose, forcefulness, courage, diplomacy and power of endurance. In carrying out his mind's powers to the fullest, he is capable of exerting an extended influence, highly beneficial to his fellow-men in the progressive welfare of mankind."

If phrenology were one of the exact sciences, the delineation could not have been more strikingly accurate.

Mr. Lloyd George's career finds few parallels, it has been truly observed, even in the history of a country that gave its highest office to Benjamin Disraeli. Amid all the romances of British politics, there is none more striking and fascinating than that embodied in the career of one who, less than twenty years ago was an unknown solicitor in an obscure Welsh village, but who to-day is installed in the second position in British politics, and that

at as early an age at which most politicians begin their Parliamentary activities. He had none of those adventitious aids of wealth or social prestige—none of the gifts of either fortune or birth—which have opened the door of the House of Commons to so many as by a golden key. He had not that immense advantage of Parliamentary patrimony which men like Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Hugh Cecil, Mr. Herbert Gladstone and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, have possessed, and which secured, even for their maiden speeches, an attentive House and an interested nation. Mr. Lloyd George's success is, as the *Saturday Review* aptly phrased it, "his own, and he has made it himself." But what are the foundations, men ask, on which the structure has been reared? The secret of Mr. Asquith's rise, according to Mr. T. P. O'Connor, is "simply his immense and instructive oratorical power." Mr. Lloyd George is endowed with the same great gift. He belongs to the small but eclectic circle of "born orators." A voice of singular sweetness and melody, adds an indescribable charm to the concise form of his vigorous utterances. "It is a high compliment," writes so eminent an authority as Mr. Massingham—"but, save for Mr. Gladstone, I recall no committee debater so good as Mr. Lloyd George." Interruption quickens and never disturbs the current of his ideas. He has all those qualities of quick repartee—of scathing invective, of logical analysis, and of caustic wit and humour which make up the necessary outfit of a great Parliamentary debater. A few examples illustrative of his scintillating wit and of his flashing

retorts may be cited. On the occasion of his first visit to Carmarthenshire in South Wales, the chairman of the meeting confessed to the audience that he was disappointed in Mr. Lloyd George's appearance. "I had heard and read so much about Mr. Lloyd George," he declared, "that I naturally expected to meet a big man in every sense, but, as you can see for yourselves, he is a very small man in stature." Mr. Lloyd George, however, was equal to the occasion. "I am grieved to find that your chairman is disappointed in my size," he quietly replied, "but this is owing to the way you have here in the South of measuring a man. In North Wales we measure a man from his chin *up*, but you evidently measure him from his chin *down*."

"I am here—" he remarked in a speech, but before he had time to finish the sentence, a noisy interruptor had chimed in: "And so am I." But the retort was as quick as it was overwhelming: "Yes—but you are not all there."

"What do our opponents really want?" he enquired in a recent speech. In the momentary pause that followed the question, there came a voice, husky with the effects of alcohol: "What I want is a change of Government." "No, no," was the ready reply—"what *you* really want is a change of drink."

The reader will recall that crushing retort of his which has already been reported in the Press. He was strenuously advocating the pressing need of a comprehensive scheme of devolution which would free the Imperial Parliament from the parochial

claims of small localities, and enable it to devote its full time and energies to meet the great responsibilities of a world-wide Empire. "We must give Home Rule not merely to Ireland," he proceeded, "but also to Scotland and Wales." "And Home Rule for Hell as well!" exclaimed an exasperated opponent. "Quite right," was the imperturbed reply, "I always like to hear a man stick up for his own country."

But following on the illuminations of his genial humour, there came at times lightning-like flashes of invective which are as deadly as they are brilliant. "If," he declared, in the House of Commons, when the Education Bill was under discussion, "our Navy were conducted on the denominational principle as is our system of national education, we should see all the warships scheduled for the various denominations, just as we now see Training Colleges marked off for the exclusive use and advantage of members of the Church of England only. We should then have Dreadnoughts for Anglicans, cruisers for Congregationalists, torpedo destroyers for fiery Methodists, while for the Baptists there would be the *submarines*."

Referring, on one occasion, to the increase of Germany's export trade, he proceeded to say: "The Germans are more pushing than ourselves. When the German traveller goes to Argentina, he is found speaking Spanish. If he goes to China, he speaks 'chin, chin,' but go to any part of the world, and you will find the English traveller pushing his goods in *broad Scotch*."

Referring to one of the Welsh Bishops who had been bitterly opposing him over Disestablishment, he declared : " You cannot make a first-rate Bishop out of a third-rate scholar, a fifth-rate preacher, a no-rate theologian and an *irate* priest."

Speaking during the controversy on the Education Bill in regard to the claims of the clergy to appoint the teachers in Church schools, he proceeded : " Why should the clergyman appoint the teacher, who is essentially a civil servant ? Why, he may, with equal fitness, claim to appoint the Exciseman, and really the parson has more in common with the Exciseman, for they both have to deal with *spirits in bondage*."

" I do not blame Mr. Austen Chamberlain," he declared, in a speech on the Fiscal question, " for sticking to his father. But the considerations which have made him a Protectionist are not fiscal but filial. Neither am I surprised to find him remaining in the Government after his father has gone out of it. History is ever repeating itself. The boy still stands—upon the burning deck."

Referring to Mr. Balfour's promise in 1904 to introduce a Licensing Bill, Mr. Lloyd George declared : " It is abundantly clear that Mr. Balfour's task is to look after ' the jug and bottle department ' of the Government."

Mr. Lloyd George is an enthusiastic golfer, and frequently enlivens his matches with witty and caustic observations. Recently when playing a foursome he was discussing with his partner a politician who is noted for his devious ways. His

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partner pulled his drive, and remarked—"What a nuisance ! I was thinking of —." "Yes," said the Chancellor; "that's why you didn't go straight."

Mr. Lloyd George is also fond of travelling and motoring. He believes that nothing temperates a jaded politician like a foreign trip.

"What," asked the writer, of Mr. Lloyd George, on one occasion, "is the 'open sesame' in the realm of politics?" Instantly there came the reply in a tone full of emphasis: "Courage, courage. It is the one thing needful. The kingdom of politics is like the kingdom of heaven: it suffereth violence, and it is the violent—the men of courageous spirit and action—that take it by storm." The comment is a commentary on his own career. It explains his success.

"Look at Chamberlain," he has been heard to say with an undisguised note of admiration. "Whenever there is hard fighting to be done, he is always to be found, not lagging in the rear, but always at the front—in the spot where the fire is thickest." The tribute may be literally applied to Mr. Lloyd George himself.

That undefinable quality, which for the want of an appropriate nomenclature men call instinct, is invariably described by keen observers to be an essential ingredient for the highest success in the political world. Gladstone and Disraeli had it, and it is a striking feature in Mr. Chamberlain's make-up. It is the great gift for attracting attention.

THE MAN AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS

Mr. Winston Churchill observes, in his biography of his father, that Lord Randolph Churchill had what Tacitus said of Mucianus, "the showman's knack of drawing public attention to everything he said or did—that strange quality, unconsciously exerted, of compelling attention and getting himself talked about." It is a quality that is not to be acquired by effort. It is the halo that distinguishes the man born with the instinct and genius for public life. Mr. Lloyd George possesses it in a superlative degree.

"In reckoning the future of a public man," observed the Parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Mail* from his watch-tower, "the aptitude for attracting attention must outweigh most other qualities. It is just this gift of attracting attention that Mr. Lloyd George has shown he possesses so pre-eminently. There is something that emanates from him that is as effective in catching the eye of the public as a red rag is in drawing the attention of the bull. He has a self-assertiveness, a self-assurance that make him stand out in any company. He could never be overlooked. You always know that he is there. He is of the type that moulds public opinion to his own."

Mr. Lloyd George has been true to his early training. Amid all the compromises and cynicisms of political strategy he has never lost his idealisms. The emoluments of high office, with the glamour of the great seats of the mighty, in the forefront of which he now sits, have in no way coagulated his democratic sympathies or dulled his

ear to the clamant needs of the people. In proof of this, let the following extracts from recent speeches suffice :—

“ It is true that we have great wealth, a greater accumulation of wealth per head of the population than is to be found in any other land, but under such a boasted condition of affairs we ought to feel a sense of shame that there should be even one of our humblest inhabitants walking the streets in rags, with no prospect, in many cases, but the workhouse and the pauper’s grave.”

“ If at the end of an average term of office it were found that the present Parliament had done nothing to cope seriously with the social condition of the people—to remove the national degradation of slums and widespread poverty and destitution in a land glittering with wealth, if they shrunk from attacking boldly the main causes of this wretchedness, notably the drink and land systems, if they do not arrest the waste of our national resources in armaments, and save up so as to be able to provide an honourable sustenance for deserving old age, then a real cry should arise in this land for a new Party, and many of us here would join in that cry. The verse which I would inscribe on every Parliament House—engraven so deeply that the tempest washed it not away—would be this :

‘ The cause which I knew not, I sought out.’
I would make Parliaments so many search-lights to flash into all the dark places of the land so as to shame oppression, wretchedness and wrong out of their lurking places. For the present system of things cannot long endure. The contrast is too acute

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between the wealth and luxury of one class and the destitution and degradation of the other. One man works too hard : has to recruit his exhausted strength in cramped quarters, breathing an atmosphere vitiated to the point of fetor. It breeds debility, disease and—worst of all ills—depression. Another man who does nothing has allotted to him acres, nay miles of breathing ground, all for himself, walled up high so that he need not share its vitalising properties with those who have helped to create his riches. One man labours and yet starves : another man lounges and still he feasts. This can't go on for ever. As sure as justice and mercy are eternal elements in the government of the world, that system which macadamises the road to luxury for the few out of the hearts of the many is doomed."

It is in such sentiments as these that one catches the deep note of his most passionate convictions, and finds the determining purpose of his public career. Whether, like his famous precursor in the Chancellery, Mr. Lloyd George too will be able to set figures to music, or whether, like another, he will introduce a Budget which shall inaugurate a new epoch in British finance, one thing is certain : he will not rest until he has effectively "spiked the apparatus of destruction," secured a Plimsoll mark for national armaments, and ministered to the social well-being of the masses. And while men are busily casting their horoscopes with a view of determining his future, the writer recalls fragments of a conversation which he had with him when making the ascent of Snowdon a few

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months back. Just as we reached the "Saddle"—that narrow ridge of precipitous rock which, though the most difficult and perilous stage in the whole ascent, yet brings one within sight of the summit—we were discussing the prospects of the coming men for future leadership. "And your own chances?" the writer naturally enquired, after certain names had been mentioned. In the quietest of tones came the reply, "I have not yet crossed the 'Saddle.'" Much has happened in these few intervening months. Mr. Lloyd George has himself heard the loud acclaims of the populace which marked the crossing of the "Saddle." He is *now* within measurable distance of the highest summit.

J. HUGH EDWARDS.

“ THE MEMBER FOR WALES ”





A CHARACTERISTIC ATTITUDE ON THE
PUBLIC PLATFORM.

By courtesy of "Vanity Fair."



“THE MEMBER FOR WALES”

BY SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES, M.P.

Mr. Lloyd George's first glimpse at the inside of the House of Commons was obtained one afternoon in 1884, when he was up in London in connection with certain legal examinations. He was only a youth, and he had not the least notion, even in the secret recesses of his mind, that he would ever play any part on the floor on which he looked down from the Strangers' Gallery. In 1884, Mr. Gladstone was in power, and his complete supremacy in the Commons was unquestioned. Moreover, his pre-eminence was made all the more striking by the fact that the Opposition was led by Sir Stafford Northcote, a cultured and amiable gentleman, but no fighter. If I may use a phrase which had not then become common in politics on this side of the Atlantic, Sir Stafford was always more ready to take it lying down than to face the foe and stand up to him. On the occasion of Mr. Lloyd George's first visit, Mr. Gladstone happened to be in immense form. Some amendment had been moved by the Opposition in regard to the Bill for extending the franchise, and Mr. Gladstone fell upon them, horse, foot and artillery, and in a very short time their trumpets were silenced and their plumes laid low.

The youth from Wales was an ardent admirer of the great Liberal leader, and he sat looking on more or less fascinated. Talking the scene over only the

other day, he said : " Gladstone simply swept the front Opposition Bench out of existence—he cowed them into silence, no one had a syllable to say in defence of the amendment, and the Speaker was just about to put the question, when a slight, stooping young man, with a heavy moustache, rose just below the gangway. He stepped out almost into the middle of the floor, he pointed scornfully at the great man, he snapped finger and thumb at him." In vain the Prime Minister frowned and glared and fumed, for the young man kept on with his daring attack, and the Opposition gradually began to pluck up its spirits again. They cheered their plucky champion and the applause reacted on him, and so something like a debate took the place of abject silence and surrender.

That slight and stooping young man with the heavy moustache was Lord Randolph Churchill, just then in more or less open revolt against his leaders, whom he contemptuously described as " the old gang " and " Marshall and Snelgrove." Mr. Lloyd George had no sympathy with the line taken by Lord Randolph, but the fighting spirit appealed to the young Celt. As he put it, when looking back on the scene, he said : " I hated him for assailing the old man—I hated him, but I felt it was fine ; it was splendid." Little did that Welsh youth think that from almost the very spot where Lord Randolph was standing he himself would, not many years later, rise and face another man whom few dared to tackle in debate. Little did he think that he too would dash in with many a

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brilliant raid and sortie, saving the situation, snatching victory out of the jaws of defeat, and rousing a dispirited Party on many a desperate occasion. And if no such dreams or visions crossed his mental horizon, still less could he foresee the day when he would stand at the box as a Cabinet Minister, having left the Board of Trade for the Treasury, and being succeeded in the office he had just vacated by the son of the man he saw standing up to Gladstone in his prime. Yet all these things have come to pass.

There was surely something appropriate in a scene such as that I have described being watched by Mr. Lloyd George on his first visit to Westminster. He saw then the value of courage in politics and in Parliament—and, after all, courage is the greatest asset there as in other fields of action and enterprise. Though the young visitor was then innocent of Parliamentary ambition, he recognised a kindred soul in Lord Randolph. "That's fine, fine," he said to himself, though the hits he admired were directed against the cause in which he believed, and if any seed was unconsciously sown in his receptive mind that day, the noble lord at the head of the Fourth Party sowed it. I have explained that at the time nothing was further from Mr. Lloyd George's mind than the notion that he would before very long be figuring on the floor and playing a part similar to that which had compelled his admiration. And in the same way, of course, Lord Randolph could not have known or suspected that among the strangers that day there was a youth from Wales, the son of Welsh peasants,

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utterly without social influence, who would, in the course of time rise to the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer by means of his own unaided brains and character, a position which Lord Randolph, in an unguarded moment, threw away.

About six years after this visit to Westminster, Mr. Lloyd George came once more to the House of Commons, but this time he was not perched up among the strangers. He was on the floor, a member of Parliament, returned by the voters in Carnarvon Boroughs in 1890, when he was twenty seven years of age. The chief impression made upon those who remember Mr. Lloyd George's first appearance was that he looked very young, and rather slight and delicate. As a matter of fact, he did not attract very much attention, and few of the men who bustled about the busy scene had any reason to suppose that he was destined to take any part, beyond the humble and almost imperceptible part played by the private member in moulding a mighty state's decrees or shaping the whisper of the throne. As I have said, he had no outside influence, no social prestige, no useful family connections to give him a start. He had to rely on himself and on himself alone.

I do not wish to give the impression that the House of Commons is a place in which social prestige will alone place a man in the front rank, for that is by no means the case. Mr. Birrell has said somewhere that in the House the members care not two straws whether the man addressing them has £100,000 a year or thirty shillings a week, whether he is the son of a duke or a journeyman

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cooper. If the man has something to say which is worth hearing they will listen, and if he has no they won't—and, as Johnson would say, "there's an end on't." This is an admirable feature about the House of Commons life which is recognised by all who know the place and its life and methods. But while this is true, it is also true that social prestige, and particularly inheritance of a name known and honoured in Parliamentary history, is of the utmost value in giving a man a start. After that, it depends on himself whether he retains the attention and regard of the House—but a start, a chance at the outset, is an enormous advantage, and this was an advantage which Mr. Lloyd George did not possess. So he made the start for himself. He did not wait too long, and before he had been a member many weeks he had taken the plunge and delivered his maiden speech.

A few days ago I chatted with him about that ordeal, which all men find trying, and which some great men have found terrifying. My right hon. friend made no pretence that he had been unmoved on the occasion in question. "I tell you," he said, "I was in a state of misery. It is no figure of speech, but literally true that my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and at first I could hardly get a word out." When he rose, it happened that Mr. Leonard Courtney (now Lord Courtney) also rose, and Mr. Courtney was called on, but, owing to a shout of "new member," Mr. Courtney gave way, and Mr. Lloyd George was in for it. The extreme nervousness to which he confesses did not cause his speech to be too modest in tone. Indeed,

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in looking back on the performance, he says candidly that it was "one of the most cheeky maiden speeches ever made." The topic was something about compensation to publicans, and in the course of the speech, the young member assailed both Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Chamberlain. He thus began in the way which he has continued to travel—going for big game.

On that particular occasion he had made careful preparation—as most men do, I imagine,—before venturing on a maiden speech. But that has not been his practice as a rule. No doubt, now that he is a leading member of the Cabinet, he does not trust to the spur of the moment for inspiration altogether. For instance, when he has to bring in a Budget, the speech will not be an impromptu effort. But many of his most successful Parliamentary speeches have been entirely unpremeditated, and have been made up while he was on his feet. I well remember one of these dashing sorties in debate—not, perhaps, the best, but one which delighted the House at the time. It was at the time that the Mullah of Somaliland was giving some little amount of trouble. Mr. Brodrick (now Lord Midleton) and Lord Cranborne (now Lord Salisbury) had given the House the Ministerial view so far as the War Office and the Foreign Office were concerned, and no one seemed inclined to add anything. Indeed, only twenty minutes remained in which anything could be said. It was then that Mr. Lloyd George jumped up from the seat in the corner below the gangway on the Opposition side. In two minutes he had the place filled with roars of

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laughter and applause, nor did the laughter come from his own side alone, for even the ranks of Torydom could not forbear to laugh.

His attack was first on the Foreign Office, represented by Lord Cranborne, and while indulging in this part of his subject, the onlooker could see that Mr. Brodrick was immensely amused. Evidently the right hon. gentleman thought he had seldom heard anything more bright and happy. Lord Cranborne, on the other hand, looked grave. But when Mr. Lloyd George had finished with the noble lord and turned his attention to Mr. Brodrick it was Lord Cranborne's turn to look cheerful—indeed, he laughed outright at some of the hits received by his right hon. friend and colleague—while Mr. Brodrick frowned as if regarding some of those hits uncalled for and ill-timed. I shall never forget the shout that went up when Mr. Lloyd George, with almost insinuating politeness, said to Mr. Brodrick, "the right hon. gentleman has said more than once that, in regard to the Mullah, the War Office has accomplished its purpose—will he tell us, therefore, whether we are running after the Mullah or is he running after us, or is each side running after the other."

I have singled out this speech simply as a specimen of his happy impromptu style, and in connection with it I may mention another factor in Mr. Lloyd George's success in Parliament. He was able to dash in on this occasion, and on many another, just at the right moment, because he was always in his place. To make a mark in Parliament you must live there, you must give up all other interests,

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you must be prepared to pass many a weary hour of boredom. For the House of Commons is a jealous mistress, and will not grant her favours to those who woo her in a casual or haphazard style. The tales that are told about brilliant men who lounge in now and then and entrance the House are fairy tales. Even a man with the genius and scholarship of Gladstone owed a great deal of his influence and success there to the fact that he was always in the place, living its life, breathing its atmosphere, keeping in touch with its varying moods. It is the only way—Mr. Lloyd George saw this at once, and he took that way.

While, however, constant and unwearying attendance in the House is essential, it is only the beginning of wisdom, and the man who thinks he can achieve success by merely remaining in his place will as surely find himself mistaken as will the man who pops in occasionally to see what is going on. To some extent, the old saying about poets can be applied to members of Parliament—they are born and not made. Of course, I am alluding to those who become prominent by their own exertions, and even in their case the remark applies, as I have said, only to a certain extent. For they must be made, that is to say they must make themselves, by means of that eternal vigilance already mentioned, and also by taking occasion by the hand. And it is in this respect that what may be called the “born” Parliament man reveals himself. It is in vain that he sits there day and night if he has not the inborn instinct which tells him when and how to act. Mr. Lloyd George seems to have

always possessed this valuable endowment—he took to Parliament as a young duck takes to water. Probably he could not explain how it was that time after time he knew what to do and how to do it. The thing flashed upon him, and this instinct, combined with that priceless gift of Parliamentary courage, has enabled him to succeed. I have no doubt at all that if he were asked he would cheerfully admit that just as his maiden speech was, on his own confession, not free from some element of "cheek," so some of his later performances were also, to some extent, open to a similar criticism.

At any rate, he has crossed swords with some of the greatest statesmen, both on his own side and on the other. I will not say of him what Mr. T. M. Healy has said of himself, that he learnt the rules of the House of Commons by breaking them all, but he has received vigorous trouncings in his time from Gladstone himself, from Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, and I believe from Sir William Harcourt also. It proved an invaluable experience. The House likes a man who can take a pounding like a sportsman without squealing, who can turn up again smiling, profiting by adversity but not being disheartened by it. And this has been the case with Mr. Lloyd George during his eighteen years of rough and tumble in that famous arena. It is not enough in Parliament to know how to give blows—it is at least as important to know how to receive them. Indeed, it is chiefly by this latter test that Parliamentarians judge each other, and, tried in this way, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not been found wanting.

I have alluded to his brilliance and to his true and genuine humour, and in this direction he has an unequalled gift for adapting similes from any prominent incident or question of the day to the purposes of debate. For instance, many a man who heard him will not soon forget the happy manner in which he introduced allusions to Port Arthur at the time when that fortress was besieged, in order to adorn a reference to Mr. Balfour. Nothing is more depressing than forced or artificial humour, but, on the other hand, nothing is more refreshing than that which is genuine and spontaneous—and Mr. Lloyd George's specimens were always the real thing. They were not dragged in, they jumped in, and apparently they surprised him as much as they delighted others. Having said so much about this side of the right hon. gentleman's oratorical method, it may be well to add that he avoided the snare of becoming known merely as a funny man. The House welcomes and applauds the man who is always bright and entertaining—but it does not always trust him or take him seriously. Some able men have missed their mark in public life, and have never wielded the influence to which they were entitled, because they never knew when to be sedate. Thus they have had the mortification of finding that when they were in earnest they were laughed at, and the more desperate their efforts to make a serious impression the louder the laughter. As I have said, Mr. Lloyd George has avoided this snare. If there has been rich humour in his speaking sometimes, there has been moving fervour at other times.

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Many a time he has illustrated in the House the truth of the old passage which teaches that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh.

The fact is that, with all his brightness, with all the charm of his light touch on occasion, Mr. Lloyd George is a man who holds on to that in which he believes with grim tenacity.

In one respect Mr. Lloyd George has astonished his friends quite as much as his opponents since he entered official life. Everyone admitted his nimbleness of fancy, his readiness in debate, his courage and his belief in the cause which he advocated—but it was said by almost everyone that he was unbusinesslike. Melancholy men would shake their heads and say that he never answered their letters, a charge which I dare say was true, for men of sense ignore many a correspondent who demands an answer about this or that affair of no importance. Somehow or other, it became quite a generally accepted view that though obviously Mr. Lloyd George must be included in any Liberal Government that might be formed, he would be best fitted for some post with no administrative responsibility—say the Chancellorship of the Duchy or something of that sort. This, it was urged, would render it possible for him to let the Government have the benefit of his undoubted power in debate, and would at the same time conceal his deplorably unbusinesslike disposition. That was how men on both sides talked right up to the formation of the Government at the end of 1905.

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Fortunately for Mr. Lloyd George, and fortunately for the country, that Government was formed by Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, one who united charming kindness of disposition with unerring insight as to the character and capacity of his fellow men. He had watched Mr. Lloyd George and had summed him up, and the consequence was that this man who was described by so many as being utterly devoid of business instinct and aptitude, was placed at the head of our chief commercial department, the Board of Trade. Many there were who shrugged their shoulders and raised their eyebrows when that appointment was announced, and others, who were not content with silently "indicating a doubt," openly proclaimed that such an experiment must end in disaster. But the event proved to be "better than these boding fears," for Mr. Lloyd George's conspicuous success at the Board of Trade is known and read of all men. It is admitted as readily by opponent as by friend—indeed, when he was promoted from that position to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, many Chambers of Commerce composed chiefly of his political foes, openly regretted the removal of the best President of the Board of Trade that they had known. Thus his success was beyond question, his enemies themselves being judges.

That success was achieved to a great extent in this way. Mr. Lloyd George has a singularly alert and receptive mind, and he is not above learning. Nay, he is always on the hunt for information, and he has the invaluable gift of quickly sifting

information, retaining that which is valuable and rejecting that which is worthless. A member of Parliament told me in connection with the right hon. gentleman's Port of London scheme—"He has consulted all of us who could tell him anything, and he has taken a little bit from one and a little bit from another. The result is that we all think it is our scheme, and naturally we hail it as the last word of wisdom." This capacity for reading human nature has stood Mr. Lloyd George in good stead in other matters of the very first importance. I refer to the striking ability, amounting really to genius, which he has displayed in the settlement of great industrial disputes. How much the country owes him in hard cash alone, apart from the avoidance of a vast amount of human suffering, will probably never be known, but most undoubtedly Mr. Lloyd George is entitled to say concerning these things, "I have done the State some service, and they know't." And that inestimable service has been done by the man who was described as devoid of business instinct, simply because he did not answer every letter gratuitously inflicted on him by bores!

I have already mentioned the fact that the late Prime Minister correctly appraised Mr. Lloyd George's gifts as a Minister of the Crown, and I may say that no one was more quick than Mr. Balfour to recognise those gifts. Those who remember the long and strenuous Education debates in 1902 will not need to be reminded of the leading part taken in them by the member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. He was always in his place,

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watchful, alert and ready—full of resource, never losing temper or courage. He seemed to take as his motto Milton's inspiring words—

“ nor bate a jot of heart or hope ;

But still bear up and steer right onward.”

As those debates went on, it was noticed that Mr. Balfour devoted more and more of his replies to the arguments of his tireless Welsh opponent. Every now and then he would let drop some such phrase as “ When the hon. gentleman himself experiences the responsibilities of office he will find—” and so on. The Conservative Prime Minister saw, and showed that he saw, that the Radical Nonconformist from Wales was marked out for the Treasury Bench. The views of the two men were wide as the poles asunder, but they had, and they still have, a high regard for each other. It happened that during those Education debates Mr. Balfour was entertained to dinner by the Welsh members. The dinner took place in the House, and Mr. Balfour and his hosts were kept informed by messengers from the chamber how the debate was proceeding. Owing to some unforeseen circumstances, an important amendment, down in the name of Mr. Lloyd George, came on sooner than had been expected—it came on, indeed, in the midst of the modest festivities in the dining room. The hon. gentleman felt that he could not go away and bring on his amendment when Mr. Balfour was kept away from the scene as the guest of the Welsh members, but Mr. Balfour urged him to go, saying it was Mr. Lloyd George's duty to go. The Welsh member still hesitated and demurred, and

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then Mr. Balfour said, " Well, I am not your leader and so have no authority, but if I were your leader I should tell you to go and to go at once." After that, of course, Mr. Lloyd George went and moved his amendment, while Mr. Balfour remained with his friends the enemy. The incident was creditable to both sides, and I mention it both for that reason, and because it shows the intimate terms of friendship existing between the two men.

There are two sorts of life in the House of Commons—the life of business and debate on the floor of the chamber, and the social life in other parts of the building. Mr. Lloyd George is essentially a sociable man, indeed, I imagine no man has climbed so high in official rank and in the status of public life and has remained so entirely unspoiled. He has never been afflicted by that melancholy failing, colloquially described as " swollen head." He is as easily approached to-day as he was when, as a private member, he was fighting his way to the front. Yet, sociable though he is, he has never played a great part in the symposia of the smoke-rooms, those gatherings where great concerns of Church and State are lightly handled, and settled with ease. This is not because he could not shine in such surroundings, but because of that faithfulness to the chamber itself which I have already mentioned. He is and always has been essentially a Parliament man, and though he is not gloomily absorbed in public affairs to the exclusion of all other human interests, he always recognises that the House has the first claim on his time and energy.

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The right hon. gentleman is still really on the threshold of his public official career. His past success has gained him the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he has yet to prove that he is equal to the task of controlling the national finance, in succession to a man of pre-eminent ability. So great is the confidence he has inspired in his friends, and so great is the admiration he has aroused in his opponents, that no one doubts for a moment that he will again go through the ordeal with credit to himself and with advantage to the country. It has been said that prediction is the most gratuitous form of folly, and so I will not attempt to peer into the future or to suggest the future triumphs which Mr. Lloyd George may enjoy. But I may add that two little coincidences struck me lately, in regard to his present status. He has just taken up his residence at No. 11, Downing Street—that little but world famous street—and I need not point out that No. 11 is next door to No. 10. Again, the handsome room in which Mr. Lloyd George works behind the Speaker's chair is next to that of Mr. Asquith. That is to say, he is next door to the Prime Minister, and there for the moment I will leave him. It was of a very different personage that Milton wrote that "one step higher would set him highest," but the words may be applied to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. And before his political career is over, he will probably be the first Minister of the Crown, and will lead the House which he first saw as a visitor, friendless and quite unknown, five and twenty years ago.

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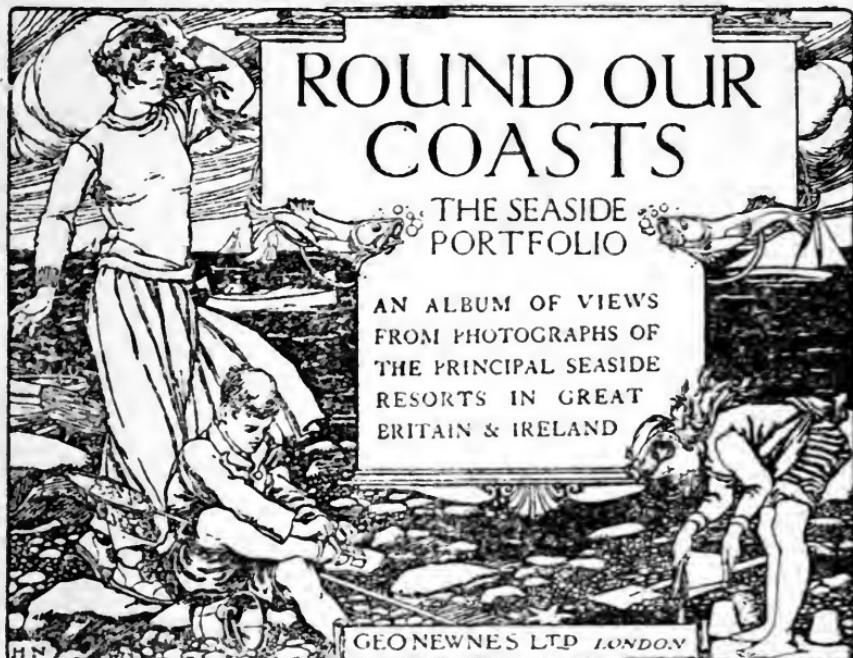
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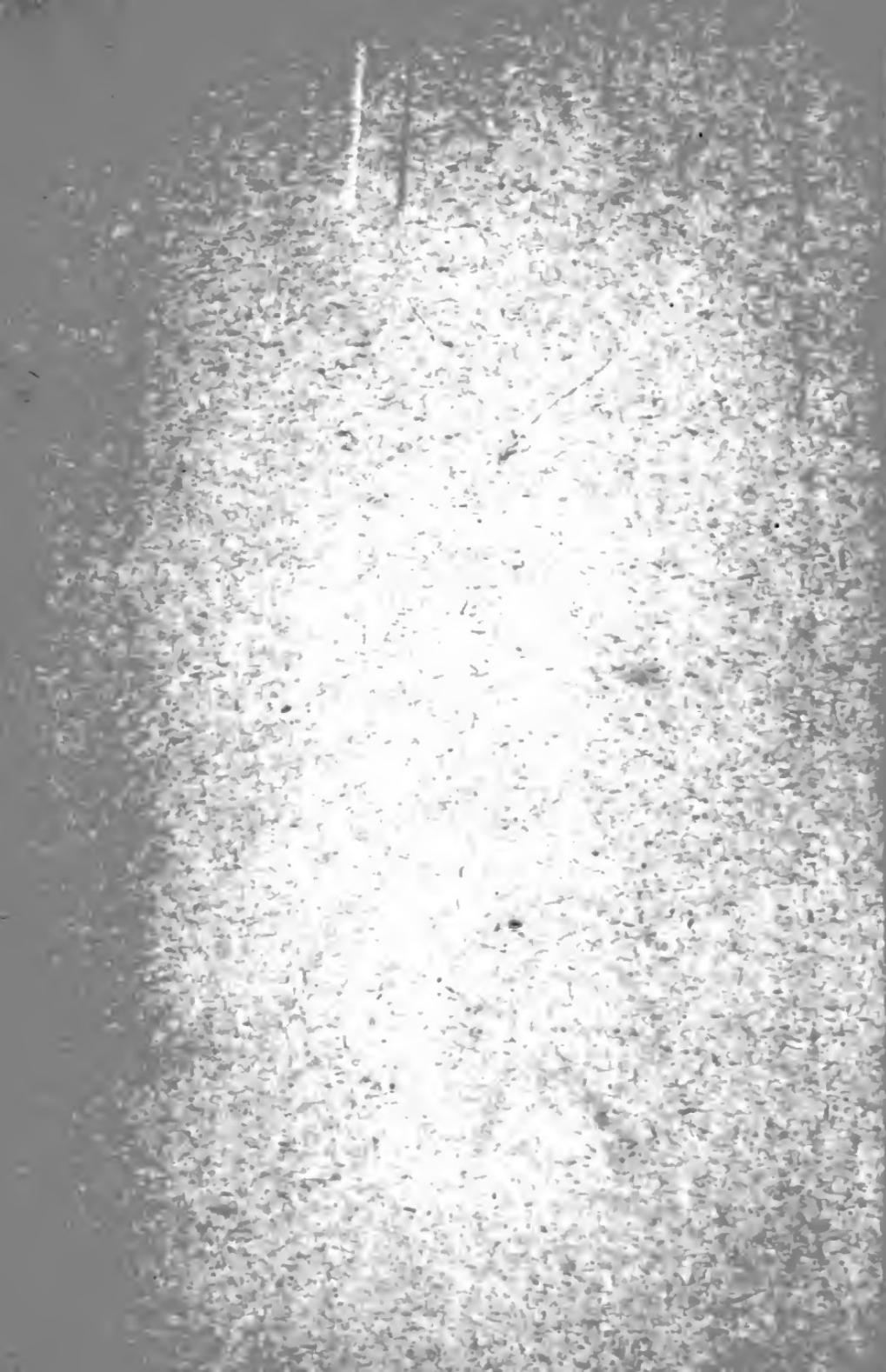
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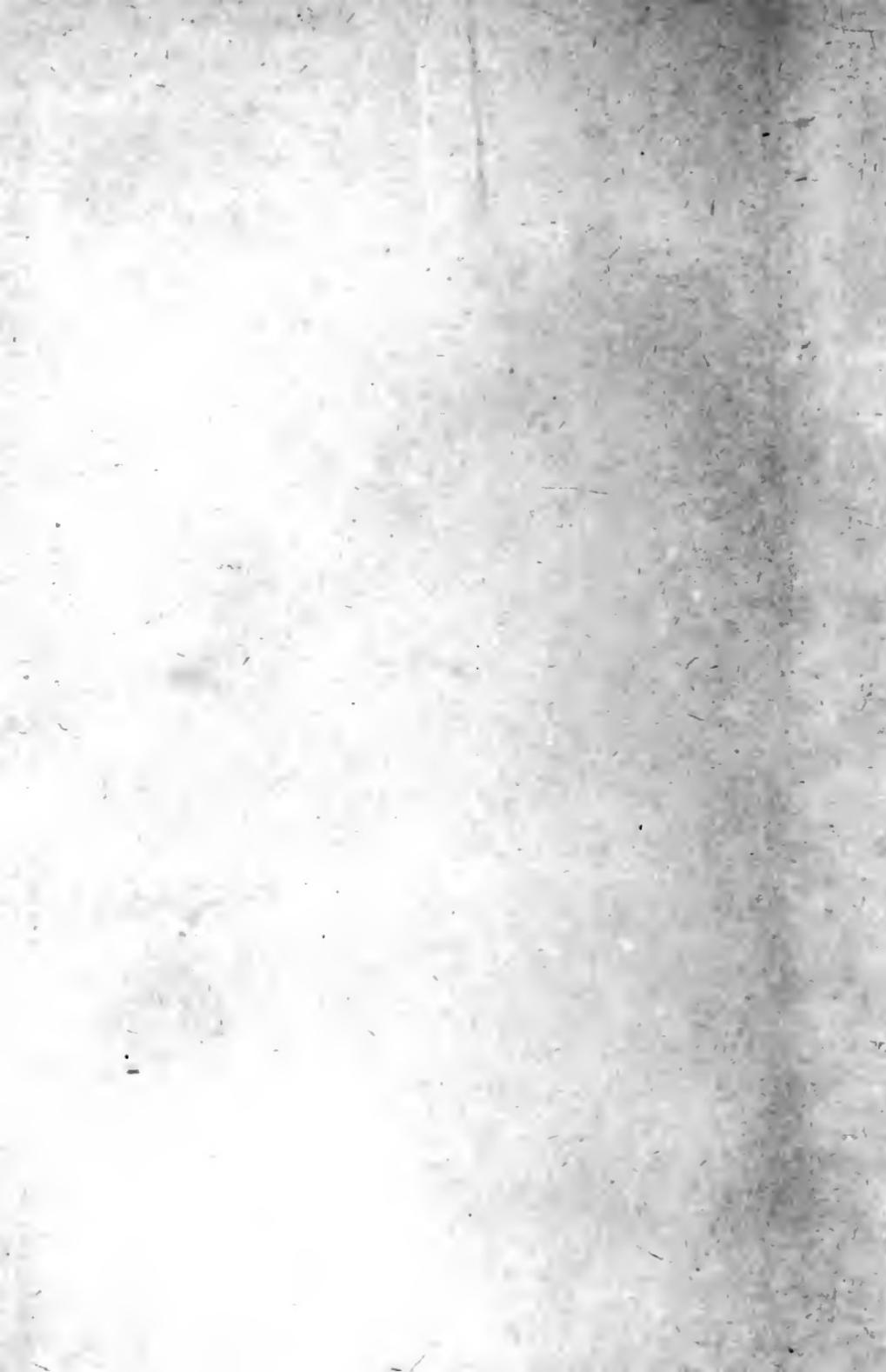
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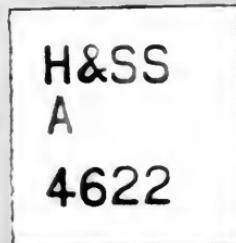
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